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MERCEDES OF CASTILE.

A ROMANCE

OF THE DAYS OF COLUMBUS.

B1676

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"THE PILOT," "THE SPY," "THE RED ROVER,"
"THE BRAVO," "THE PATHFINDER," ETC.

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MERCEDES OF CASTILE.

CHAPTER I.

But where is Harold? Shall I then forget
To urge the gloomy wanderer o'er the wave?
Little reck'd he of all that men regret;
No loved-one now in feign'd lament could rave;
No friend the parting hand extended gave
Ere the cold stranger pass'd to other climes.

BYRON.

THE reader is not to suppose that the eyes of Europe were on our adventurers. Truth and falsehood, inseparable companions, it would seem, throughout all time, were not then diffused over the land, by means of newspapers, with mercenary diligence; and it was only the favoured few who got early intelligence of enterprises like that in which Columbus was en-

gaged. Luis de Bobadilla had, therefore, stolen from court unnoticed; and they who came in time to miss his presence, either supposed him to be on a visit to one of his castles, or to have gone forth on another of those wandering tours, which were supposed to be blemishes on his chivalry, and unworthy of his birth. As for the Genoese himself, his absence was scarcely heeded; though it was understood among the courtiers generally that Isabella had entered into some arrangement with him, which gave the adventurer higher rank and greater advantages than his future services would probably ever justify. The other principal adventurers were too insignificant to attract much attention, and they had severally departed for the coast without the knowledge of their movements extending far beyond the narrow circles of their own acquaintances. Neither was this expedition, so bold in its conception, and so momentous in its consequences, destined to sail from one of the more important ports of Spain; but orders to furnish the necessary means had been sent

to a haven of altogether inferior rank, and which would seem to have possessed no other recommendations for this particular service than hardy mariners, and a position without the pass of Gibraltar, which was sometimes rendered hazardous by the rovers of Africa. The order, however, is said to have been issued to the place selected in consequence of its having incurred some legal penalty, by which it had been condemned to serve the crown for a twelvemonth with two armed caravels. Such punishments, it would seem, were part of the policy of an age in which navies were little more than levies on sea-ports, and when fleets were usually manned by soldiers from the land.

Palos de Maguer, the place ordered to pay this tribute for its transgression, was a town of little importance even at the close of the fifteenth century, and it has since dwindled to an insignificant fishing village. Like most places that are little favoured by nature, its population was hardy and adventurous, as adventure was then limited by ignorance. It possessed

no stately caracks, its business and want of opulence confining all its efforts to the lighter caravel, and the still more diminutive felucca. All the succour, indeed, that Columbus had been able to procure from the two crowns by his protracted solicitations, was the order for the equipment of the two caravels mentioned, with the additional officers and men that always accompanied a royal expedition. The reader, however, is not to infer from this fact any niggardliness of spirit or any want of faith on the part of Isabella. It was partly owing to the exhausted condition of her treasury, a consequence of the late war with the Moor, and more, perhaps, to the experience and discretion of the great navigator himself, who well understood that, for the purposes of discovery, vessels of this size would be more useful and secure than those that were larger.

On a rocky promontory, at a distance of less than a league from the village of Palos, stood the convent of La Rabida, since rendered so celebrated by its hospitality to Columbus. At the gate of this building, seven years before,

the navigator, leading his youthful son by the hand, had presented himself a solicitor for food in behalf of the wearied boy. The story is too well known to need repetition here; and we will merely add, that his long residence in this convent, and the firm friends he had made of the holy Franciscans who occupied it, as well as among others in their vicinity, were also probably motives that influenced him in directing the choice of the crown to this particular place. Columbus had not only circulated his opinions with the monks, but with the more intelligent of the neighbourhood, and the first converts he made in Spain were at this place.

Notwithstanding all the circumstances named, the order of the crown to prepare the caravels in question spread consternation among the mariners of Palos. In that age it was thought a wonderful achievement to follow the land along the coast of Africa, and to approach the equator. The vaguest notions existed in the popular mind concerning those unknown regions; and many even believed that, by jour-

neying south, it was possible to reach a portion of the earth where animal and vegetable life must cease, on account of the intense heat of the sun. The revolutions of the planets, the diurnal motion of the earth, and the causes of the changes in the seasons, were then profound mysteries even to the learned; or, if glimmerings of the truth did exist, they existed as the first rays of the dawn dimly and hesitatingly announce the approach of day. It is not surprising, therefore, that the simple-minded and unlettered mariners of Palos viewed the order of the Crown as a sentence of destruction on all who might be fated to obey it. The ocean, when certain limits were passed, was thought to be, like the firmament, a sort of chaotic void; and the imaginations of the ignorant had conjured up currents and whirlpools, that were believed to lead to fiery climates, and frightful scenes of natural destruction. Some even fancied it possible to reach the uttermost boundaries of the earth, and to slide off into vacuum, by means of swift but imperceptible currents.

Such was the state of things in the middle of

the month of July. Columbus was still in the convent of Rabida, in the company of his constant friend and adherent, Fray Juan Perez, when a lay brother came to announce that a stranger had arrived at the gate, asking earnestly for the Señor Christoval Colon.

"Hath he the aspect of a messenger from the Court?" demanded the navigator; "for, since the failure of the mission of Juan de Peñalosa, there is need of further orders from their Highnesses to enforce their gracious intentions."

"I think not, Señor," answered the lay brother; "these hard-riding couriers of the Queen generally appearing with their steeds in a foam, and with hurried air and blustering voices; whereas this young cavalier behaveth modestly, and rideth a stout Andalusian mule."

"Did he give thee his name, good Sancho?"

"He gave me two, Señor, styling himself Pedro de Muños, or Pero Gutierrez, without the Don."

"This is well," exclaimed Columbus, turning a little quickly towards the door, but other-

wise maintaining a perfect self-command. "I expect the youth, and he is right welcome. Let him come in at once, good Sancho, and that without any useless ceremony."

"An acquaintance of the court, Señor?" observed the prior, in the way one indirectly asks a question.

"A youth that hath the spirit, father, to adventure life and character for the glory of God, through the advancement of his church, by embarking in our enterprise. He cometh of a reputable lineage, and is not without the gifts of fortune. But for the care of guardians, and his own youth, gold would not have been wanting in our need. As it is, he ventureth his own person, if one can be said to risk aught in an expedition that seemeth truly to set even the orders of their Highnesses at defiance."

As Columbus ceased speaking the door opened, and Luis de Bobadilla entered. The young grandee had laid aside all the outward evidences of his high rank, and now appeared in the modest guise of a traveller, belonging to a

class more likely to furnish a recruit for the voyage than one of the rank he really was. Saluting Columbus with cordial and sincere respect, and the Franciscan with humble deference, the first at once perceived that this gallant and reckless spirit had truly engaged in the enterprise with a determination to use all the means that would enable him to go through with it.

"Thou art welcome, Pedro," Columbus observed, as soon as Luis had made his salutations; "thou hast reached the coast at a moment when thy presence and support may be exceedingly useful. The first order of her Highness, by which I should have received the services of the two caravels to which the state is entitled, hath been utterly disregarded; and a second mandate, empowering me to seize upon any vessel that may suit our necessities, hath fared but little better, notwithstanding the Señor de Peñalosa was sent directly from Court to enforce its conditions, under a penalty to the port of paying a daily tax of two hundred maravedis until the order should be ful-

filled. The idiots have conjured all sorts of ills with which to terrify themselves and their neighbours; and I seem to be as far from the completion of my hopes as I was before I procured the friendship of this holy friar and the royal protection of Doña Isabella. It is a weary thing, my good Pedro, to waste a life in hopes defeated, with such an object in view as the spread of knowledge and the extension of the Church!"

"I am the bearer of good tidings, Señor," answered the young noble. "In coming hither from the town of Moguer, I journeyed with one Martin Alonzo Pinzon, a mariner with whom I have formerly voyaged, and we have had much discourse concerning your commission and difficulties. He tells me that he is known to you, Señor Colon; and I should judge from his discourse that he thinketh favourably of the chances."

"He doth — he doth, indeed, good Pedro, and hath often listened to my reasoning like a discreet and skilful navigator, as, I make no

question, he really is. But didst thou say that thou wast *known* to him?"

"Señor, I did. We have voyaged together as far as Cyprus on one occasion, and again to the island of the English. In such long voyages, men get to some knowledge of each other's temperament and disposition; and, of a sooth, I think well of both in this Señor Pinzon."

"Thou art young to pass an opinion on a mariner of Martin Alonzo's years and experience, son," put in the friar; "a man of much repute in this vicinity, and of no little wealth. Nevertheless, I am rejoiced to hear that he continueth of the same mind as formerly in relation to the great voyage; for, of late, I did think even he had begun to waver."

Don Luis had expressed himself of the great man of the vicinity more like a Bobadilla than became his assumed name of Muños, and a glance from the eye of Columbus told him to forget his rank, and to remember the disguise he had assumed.

"This is truly encouraging," observed the navigator, "and openeth a brighter view of Cathay. Thou wast journeying between Moguer and Palos, I think thou saidst, when this discourse was had with our acquaintance, the good Martin Alonzo?"

"I was, Señor, and it was he who sent me hither in quest of the admiral. He gave you the title that the Queen's favour hath bestowed; and I consider that no small sign of friendship, as most others with whom I have conversed in this vicinity seem disposed to call you by any other name."

"None need embark in this enterprise," returned the navigator, gravely, as if he would admonish the youth that this was an occasion on which he might withdraw from the adventure, if he saw fit, "who feel disposed to act differently, or who distrust my knowledge."

"By San Pedro, my patron, they tell another tale at Palos, and at Moguer, Señor Amirale," returned Luis, laughing; "at which places I hear that no man whose skin hath been a little warmed by the sun of the ocean

dare show himself in the highways, lest he be sent to Cathay by a road that no one ever yet travelled except in fancy! There is, notwithstanding, one free and willing volunteer, Señor Colon, who is disposed to follow you to the edge of the earth, if it be flat, and to follow you quite round it, should it prove to be a sphere; and that is one Pedro de Muños, who engageth with you from no sordid love of gold, or love of aught else that men usually prize; but from the pure love of adventure, somewhat excited and magnified, perhaps, by love of the purest and fairest maid of Castile."

Fray Juan Perez gazed at the speaker, whose free manner and open speech a good deal surprised him; for Columbus had succeeded in awakening so much respect, that few presumed to use any levity in his presence, even before he was dignified by the high rank so recently conferred by the commission of Isabella. Little did the good monk suspect that one of a still higher personal rank, though entirely without official station, stood before him, in the guise of Pedro de Muños; and he could not refrain

from again expressing the little relish he felt for such freedom of speech and deportment towards those whom he himself habitually regarded with so much respect.

"It would seem, Señor Pedro de Muños," he said, "if that be thy name,—though Duke, or Marquess, or Count, would be a title better becoming thy bearing,—that thou treatest his Excellency the Admiral with quite as much freedom of thought, at least, as thou treatest the worthy Martin Alonzo of our own neighbourhood. A follower should be more humble, and not pass his jokes on the opinions of his leader in this loose style of expression."

"I crave your pardon, holy father, and that of the Admiral too, who better understandeth me, I trust, if there be any just grounds of offence. All I wish to express is, that I know this Martin Alonzo of your neighbourhood as an old fellow-voyager; that we have ridden some leagues in company this very day; and that, after close discourse, he hath manifested a friendly desire to put his shoulder to the wheel, in order to lift the expedition, if not

from a slough of mud, at least from the sands of the river; and that he hath promised to come also to this good convent of La Rabida for that same purpose, and no other. As for myself, I can only add, that here I am, ready to follow wheresoever the honourable Señor Colon may see fit to lead."

"'Tis well, good Pedro,—'tis well," rejoined the Admiral. "I give thee full credit for sincerity and spirit, and that must content thee until an opportunity offereth to convince others. I like these tidings concerning Martin Alonzo, father, since he might truly do us much service; and his zeal had assuredly begun to flag."

"That might he, and that will he, if he engageth seriously in the affair. Martin is the greatest navigator on all this coast; for though I did not know that he had ever been even to Cyprus, as would appear by the account of this youth, I was well aware that he had frequently sailed as far north as France, and as far south as the Canaries. Dost think Cathay much more remote than Cyprus, Señor Almirante?"

Columbus smiled at this question, and shook his head in the manner of one who would prepare a friend for some sore disappointment.

"Although Cyprus be not distant from the Holy Land, and the seat of the Infidel's power," he answered, "Cathay must lie much more remote. I flatter not myself, nor those who are disposed to follow me, with the hope of reaching the Indies short of a voyage that shall extend to some eight hundred or a thousand leagues."

"'Tis a fearful and a weary distance!" exclaimed the Franciscan, — while Luis stood in smiling unconcern, equally indifferent whether he had to traverse one thousand or ten thousand leagues of ocean, so that the journey led to Mercedes, and was productive of adventure, — "a fearful and a weary distance! — and yet I doubt not, Señor Almirante, that you are the very man designed by Providence to overcome it, and to open the way for those who will succeed you, bearing on high the cross of Christ, and the promises of his redemption!"

"Let us hope this," returned Columbus,

reverently making the usual sign of the sacred emblem to which his friend alluded. "As a proof that we have some worldly foundation for the expectation, here cometh the Señor Pinzon himself, apparently hot with haste to see us."

Martin Alonzo Pinzon, whose name is so familiar to the reader as one who greatly aided the Genoese in his vast undertaking, now entered the room, seemingly earnest and bent on some fixed purpose, as Columbus's observant eye had instantly detected. Fray Juan Perez was not a little surprised to see that the first salutation of Martin Alonzo, the great man of the neighbourhood, was directed to Pedro, the second to the Admiral, and the third to himself. There was not time, however, for the worthy Franciscan, who was a little apt to rebuke any dereliction of decency on the spot, to express what he felt on this occasion, ere Martin Alonzo opened his errand with an eagerness that showed he had not come on a mere visit of friendship or of ceremony.

"I am sorely vexed, Señor Almirante," he commenced, "at learning the obstinacy, and

the disobedience to the orders of the Queen, that have been shown among our mariners of Palos. Although a dweller of the port itself, and one who hath always viewed your opinions of this western voyage with respect, if not with absolute faith, I did not know the full extent of this insubordination until I met by accident an old acquaintance on the highway, in the person of Don Pedro—I ought to say the *Señor* Pedro de Muños — here, who, coming from a distance as he doth, hath discovered more of our backslidings than I had learned myself on the spot. But, Señor, you are not now to hear for the first time of what sort of stuff men are made. They are reasoning beings, we are told; notwithstanding which undeniable truth, as there is not one in a hundred who is at the trouble to do his own thinking, means may be found to change the opinions of a sufficient number for all your wants, without their even suspecting it."

"This is very true, neighbour Martin Alonzo," put in the friar; "so true, that it might go into a homily, and do no disservice to

religion. Man *is* a rational animal, and an accountable animal; but it is not meet that he should be a *thinking* animal. In matters of the Church, now, its interests being intrusted to a ministry, what have the unlearned and ignorant to say of its affairs? In matters of navigation, it doth indeed seem as if one steersman were better than a hundred! Although man be a reasoning animal, there are quite as many occasions when he is bound to obey without reasoning, and few when he should be permitted to reason without obeying."

"All true, holy friar and most excellent neighbour; so true, that you will find no one in Palos to deny that, at least. And now we are on the subject, I may as well add, that it is the Church that hath thrown more obstacles in the way of the Señor Almirante's success than any other cause. All the old women of the port declare that the notion of the earth's being round is a heresy, and contrary to the Bible; and, if the truth must be said, there are not a few underlings of this

very convent, who uphold them in the opinion. It doth appear unnatural to tell one who hath never quitted the land, and who seeth himself much oftener in a valley than on an eminence, that the globe is round; and, though I have had many occasions to see the ocean, it would not easily find credit with me, were it not for the fact that we see the upper and smaller sails of a ship first, when approaching her, as well as the vanes and crosses of towns, albeit they are the smaller objects about vessels and churches. We mariners have one way to inspirit our followers, and you churchmen have another; and, now that I intend to use my means to put wiser thoughts into the heads of the seamen of Palos, reverend friar, I look to you to set the Church's engines at work, so as to silence the women, and to quell the doubts of the most zealous among your own brotherhood."

"Am I to understand by this, Señor Pinzon," demanded Columbus, "that you intend to take a direct and more earnest interest than before in the success of my enterprise?"

"Señor, you may. That is my intention, if we can come to as favourable an understanding about the terms as your worship would seem to have entered into with our most honoured mistress, Doña Isabella de Trastamara. I have had some discourse with Señor Don — I would say with the Señor Pedro de Muños here — 'Odd's folly! an excess of courtesy is getting to be a vice with me of late — but, as he is a youth of prudence, and manifests a desire to embark with you, it hath stirred my fancy so far, that I would gladly be of the party. Señor de Muños and I have voyaged so much together, that I would fain see his worthy countenance once more upon the ocean."

"These are cheerful tidings, Martin Alonzo," eagerly put in the friar: "and thy soul, and the souls of all who belong to you, will reap the benefits of this manly and pious resolution. It is one thing, Señor Almirante, to have their Highnesses of your side in a place like Palos, and another to have our worthy neighbour Pinzon here; for if they are sovereigns in law, he is an emperor in opinion. I

doubt not that the caravels will now be speedily forthcoming."

"Since thou seemest to have truly resolved to enter into our enterprise, Señor Martin Alonzo," added Columbus, with his dignified gravity, "out of doubt thou hast well bethought thee of the conditions, and art come prepared to let them be known. Do they savour of the terms that have already been in discussion between us?"

"Señor Admiral, they do; though gold is not just now so abundant in our purses as when we last discoursed on this subject. On that head some obstacles may exist; but on all others, I doubt not, a brief explanation between us will leave the matter free from doubt."

"As to the eighth, for which I stand committed with their Highnesses, Señor Pinzon, there will be less reason now to raise that point between us than when we last met, as other means may offer to redeem that pledge." As Columbus spoke, his eyes involuntarily turned towards the pretended Pedro, whither those of

Martin Alonzo Pinzon significantly followed. "But there will be many difficulties to overcome with these terrified and silly mariners, which may yield to thy influence. If thou wilt come with me into this chamber, we will at once discuss the heads of our treaty, leaving this youth the while to the hospitality of our reverend friend."

The prior raising no objection to this proposition, it was immediately put in execution, Columbus and Pinzon withdrawing to a more private apartment, leaving Fray Juan Perez alone with our hero.

"Then thou thinkest seriously, son, of making one in this great enterprise of the Admiral's?" said the Franciscan, as soon as the door was closed on those who had just left them, eyeing Luis, for the first time, with a more strict scrutiny than hitherto he had leisure to exercise. "Thou carriest thyself much like the young lords of the court, and wilt have occasion to acquire a less towering air in the narrow limits of one of our Palos caravels."

"I am no stranger to Nao, Carraca, Fusta, Pinaza, Carabelon, or Felucca, holy prior, and shall carry myself with the Admiral as I should carry myself before Don Fernando of Aragon, were he my fellow-voyager, or in the presence of Boabdil of Grenada, were that unhappy monarch again seated on the throne from which he hath been so lately hurled, urging his chivalry to charge the knights of Christian Spain."

"These are fine words, son, ay, and uttered with a tilting air, if truth must be said; but they will avail thee nothing with this Genoese, who hath that in him that would leave him unabashed even in the presence of our gracious lady, Doña Isabella, herself."

"Thou knowest the Queen, holy monk?" inquired Luis, forgetting his assumed character in the freedom of his address.

"I ought to know her inmost heart, son, for often have I listened to her pure and meek spirit in the secrets of the confessional. Much as she is beloved by us Castilians, no one can know the true spiritual elevation of that pious

Princess and most excellent woman but they who have had occasion to shrive her."

Don Luis hemmed, played with the handle of his rapier, and then gave utterance to the uppermost thought, as usual.

"Didst thou, by any chance of thy priestly office, father, ever find it necessary to confess a maiden of the court, who is much esteemed by the Queen," he inquired, "and whose spirit, I 'll answer for it, is as pure as that of Doña Isabella's itself."

"Son, thy question denoteth greater necessity for repairing to Salamanca, in order to be instructed in the history, and practices, and faith of the Church, than to be entering into an enterprise even as commendable as this of Colon's. Dost thou not know that we churchmen are not permitted to betray the secrets of the confessional, or to draw comparisons between penitents? and, moreover, that we do not take even Doña Isabella — the blessed Marie keep her ever in mind!—as the standard of holiness to which all Christians are expected to aim? The maiden of whom thou speakest

may be virtuous according to worldly notions, and yet a grievous sinner in the eyes of mother Church."

"I should like, before I quit Spain, to hear a Mendoza or a Guzman, who hath not a shaven crown, venture to hint as much, most reverend prior!"

"Thou art hot and restive, and talkest idly, son. What would one like thee find to say to a Guzman or a Mendoza, or a Bobadilla even, did he affirm what thou wishest? But who is the maid in whom thy feelings seem to take so deep, although I question if it be not an unrequited, interest?"

"Nay, I did but speak in idleness. Our stations have made such a chasm between us, that it is little likely we should ever come to speech; nor is my merit such as would be apt to cause her to forget her high advantages."

"Still, she hath a name?"

"She hath, truly, prior, and a right noble one it is. I had the Doña Maria de las Mercedes de Valverde in my thoughts when the

light remark found utterance. Haply, thou mayest know that illustrious heiress?"

Fray Juan Perez, a truly guileless priest, started at the name; then he gazed intently, and with a sort of pity, at the youth; after which he bent his head towards the tiles beneath his feet, smiled, and shook his head like one whose thoughts were very active.

"I do indeed know the lady," he said; "and even when last at court, on this errand of Colon's, their own confessor being ill, I shrived her, as well as my royal mistress. That she is worthy of Doña Isabella's esteem is true; but thy admiration for this noble maiden, which must be something like the distant reverence we feel for the clouds that sail above our heads, can scarce be founded on any rational hopes."

"Thou canst not know that, father. If this expedition end as we trust, all who engage in it will be honoured and advanced, — and why not I as well as another?"

"In this thou mayest utter truth; but as

for the Doña—" The Franciscan checked himself, for he was about to betray the secret of the confessional. He had, in truth, listened to the contrition of Mercedes, of which her passion for Luis was the principal cause; and it was he who, with a species of pious fraud, of which he was himself unconscious, had first pointed out the means by which the truant noble might be made to turn his propensity to rove to the profit of his love; and his mind was full of her beautiful exhibition of purity and natural feeling, nearly even to overflowing. But habit and duty interfered in time, and he did not utter the name that had been trembling on his lips. Still his thoughts continued in this current, and his tongue gave utterance to that portion of them which he believed to be harmless. "Thou hast been much about the world, it would seem by Master Alonzo's greeting," he continued, after a short pause; "didst ever meet, son, with a certain Cavalier of Castile, named Don Luis de Bobadilla,—a grandee, who also bears the title of Conde de Llera?"

"I know little of his hopes, and care less for his titles," returned Luis, calmly, who thought he would manifest a magnanimous indifference to the Franciscan's opinions; "but I have seen the cavalier, and a roving, mad-brained, graceless youth it is, of whom no good can be expected."

"I fear this is but too true," rejoined Fray Juan Perez, shaking his head in a melancholy manner; "and yet they say he is a gallant knight, and the very best lance in all Spain."

"Ay, he may be that," answered Luis, hemming a little louder than was decorous, for his throat began to grow husky,—"ay, he may be that; but of what avail is a good lance without a good character? I hear little commendable of this young Conde de Llera."

"I trust he is not the man he generally passeth for," answered the simple-hearted monk, without in the least suspecting his companion's disguise; "and I do know that there are some who think well of him,— nay, whose existence, I might say, whose very souls are wrapped up in him!"

"Holy Franciscan! — why wilt thou not mention the names of one or two of these?" demanded Luis, with an impetuosity that caused the prior to start.

"And why should I give this information to thee, young man, more than to another?"

"Why, father, — why, for several most excellent and unanswerable reasons. In the first place, I am a youth myself, as thou seest; and example, they say, is better than precept. Then, too, *I* am somewhat given to roving, and it may profit me to know how others of the same propensity have sped. Moreover, it would gladden my inmost heart to hear that— but two sufficient reasons are better than three, and thou hast the first number already."

Fray Juan Perez, a devout Christian, a learned churchman, and a liberal scholar, was as simple as a child in matters that related to the world and its passions. Nevertheless, he was not so dull as to overlook the strange deportment and stranger language of his companion. A direction had been given to his thoughts by the mention of the name of our

heroine; and, as he himself had devised the very course taken by our hero, the truth began to dawn on his imagination.

"Young cavalier," he exclaimed, "thou art Don Luis de Bobadilla!"

"I shall never deny the prophetic knowledge of a churchman, worthy father, after this detection! I *am* he thou sayest, entered on this expedition to win the love of Mercedes de Valverde."

"'Tis as I thought. And yet, Señor, you might have taken our poor convent less at an advantage. Suffer that I command the lay brothers to place refreshments before you?"

"Thy pardon, excellent prior. Pedro de Muños, or even Pero Gutierrez, hath no need of food. But, now that thou knowest me, there can be less reason for not conversing of the Doña Mercedes."

"Now that I know thee, Señor Conde, there is greater reason for silence on that head," returned Fray Juan Perez, smiling. "Thine aunt, the most esteemed and virtuous lady of Moya, can give thee all occasion to urge thy

suit with this charming maiden; and it would ill become a churchman to temper her prudence by any indiscreet interference."

This explanation was the commencement of a long and confidential dialogue, in which the worthy prior, now that he was on his guard, succeeded in preserving his main secret, though he much encouraged the young man in the leading hope of his existence, as well as in his project to adhere to the fortunes of Columbus. In the mean while, the great navigator himself continued closeted with his new counsellor; and when the two reappeared, it was announced to those without that the latter had engaged in the enterprise with so much zeal, that he actually entertained the intention of embarking on board of one of the caravels in person.

CHAPTER II.

Yet he to whom each danger hath become
A dark delight, and every wild a home,
Still urges onward—undismay'd to tread
Where life's fond lovers would recoil with dread.
The Abencerrage.

THE intelligence that Martin Alonzo Pinzon was to make one of the followers of Colon spread through the village of Palos like wild-fire. Volunteers were no longer wanting; the example of one known and respected in the vicinity operating far more efficiently on the minds of the mariners than the orders of the Queen, or the philosophy of Columbus. Martin Alonzo they knew; they were accustomed to submit to his influence; they could follow in his footsteps, and had confidence in his judgment; whereas the naked orders of an unseen sovereign, however much beloved, had

more of the character of a severe judgment than of a generous enterprise; and as for Columbus, though most men were awed by his dignified appearance and grave manner, when out of sight, he was as much regarded as an adventurer at Palos as he had been at Santa Fé.

The Pinzons set about their share of the expedition after the manner of those who were more accustomed to execute than to plan. Several of the family entered cordially into the work; and a brother of Martin Alonzo's, whose name was Vicente Yañez, also a mariner by profession, joined the adventurers as commander of one of the vessels, while another took service as a pilot. In short, the month that succeeded the incidents just mentioned was actively employed, and more was done in that short space of time towards bringing about a solution of the great problem of Columbus than had been accomplished, in a practical way, during the seventeen long years that the subject had occupied his time, and engrossed his thoughts.

Notwithstanding the local influence of the Pinzons, a vigorous opposition to the project still existed in the heart of the little community that had been chosen for the place of equipment of the different vessels required. This family had its enemies as well as its friends; and, as is usual with most human undertakings, two parties sprang up, one of which was quite as busily occupied in thwarting the plans of the navigator as the other was engaged in promoting them. One vessel had been seized for the service, under the order of the Court, and her owners became leaders of the dissatisfied faction. Many seamen, according to the usage of that day, had been impressed for duty on this extraordinary and mysterious voyage; and, as a matter of course, they and their friends were not slow to join the ranks of the disaffected. Much of the necessary work was found to be imperfectly done; and when the mechanics were called on to repair these omissions, they absconded in a body. As the time for sailing approached, the contention grew more and more violent,

and even the Pinzons had the mortification of discovering that many of those who had volunteered to follow their fortunes began to waver, and that some had unequivocally deserted.

Such was the state of things towards the close of the month of July, when Martin Alonzo Pinzon again repaired to the convent of Santa Maria de Rabida, where Columbus continued to pass most of the time that was not given to a direct personal superintendence of the preparations, and where Luis de Bobadilla, who was altogether useless in the actual condition of affairs, also passed many a weary hour, chafing for active duty, and musing on the loveliness, truth, and virtues of Mercedes de Valverde. Fray Juan Perez was earnest in his endeavours to facilitate the execution of the objects of his friends, and he had actually succeeded, if not in absolutely suppressing the expression of all injurious opinions on the part of the less enlightened of the brotherhood, at least in rendering the promulgation of them more cautious and private.

When Columbus and the prior were told

that the Señor Pinzon sought an interview, neither was slow in granting the favour. As the hour of departure drew nigh, the importance of this man's exertions became more and more apparent, and both well knew that the royal protection of Isabella herself, just at that moment and in that place, was of less account than that of this active mariner. The Señor Pinzon, therefore, had not long to wait for his audience, having been ushered into the room that was commonly occupied by the zealous Franciscan almost as soon as his request was preferred.

"Thou art right welcome, worthy Martin Alonzo!" exclaimed the prior, the moment he caught a glimpse of the features of his old acquaintance. "How get on matters at Palos, and when shall we have this holy undertaking in a fair direction for success?"

"By San Francisco, reverend prior, that is more than it will be safe for any man to answer. I have thought we were in a fair way to make sail a score of times, when some unforeseen difficulty hath arisen. The Santa

Maria, on board which the Admiral and the Señor Gutierrez, or De Muños, if he will have it so, will embark, is already fitted. She may be set down as a tight craft, and somewhat exceedeth a hundred tons in burthen; so that I trust his Excellency, and all the gallant cavaliers who may accompany him, will be as comfortable as the holy monks of Rabida,—more especially as the good caravel hath a deck."

"These are truly glad tidings," returned the prior, rubbing his hands with delight,—"and the excellent craft hath really a deck! Señor Almirante, thou mayest not be in a vessel that is altogether worthy of thy high aim; but, on the whole, thou wilt be both safe and comfortable, keeping in view, in particular, this convenient and sheltering deck."

"Neither my safety nor my convenience is a consideration to be mentioned, friend Juan Perez, when there is question of so much graver matters. I rejoice that thou hast come to the convent this morning, Señor Martin Alonzo, as being about to address letters to

the Court, by means of an especial courier, I desire to know the actual condition of things. Thou thinkest the Santa Maria will be in a state for service by the end of the month?"

"Señor, I do. The ship hath been prepared with due diligence, and will conveniently hold some three score, should the panic that hath seized on so many of the besotted fools of Palos leave us that number, who may still be disposed to embark. I trust that the saints look upon our many efforts, and will remember our zeal when we shall come to a joint division of the benefits of this undertaking, which hath had no equal in the history of navigation!"

"The benefits, honest Martin Alonzo, will be found in the spread of the Church's dominion, and the increased glory of God," put in the prior, significantly.

"Out of all question, holy Fray Juan Perez, this is the common aim; though I trust it is permitted to a painstaking mariner to bethink him of his wife and children, in discreet subordination to those greater ends. I have much mistaken the Señor Colon if he do not look for

some little advantage, in the way of gold, from this visit to Cathay."

"Thou hast not mistaken me, honest Martin Alonzo," returned Columbus, gravely. "I do indeed expect to see the wealth of the Indies pouring into the coffers of Castile, in consequence of this voyage. In sooth, excellent prior, in my view, the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre is dependent mainly on the success of our present undertaking, in the way of a substantial worldly success."

"This is well, Señor Admiral," put in Martin Alonzo, a little hastily, "and ought to gain us great favour in the eyes of all good Christians,—more especially with the monks of La Rabida. But it is hard enough to persuade the mariners of the port to obey the Queen in this matter, and to fulfil their engagements with ourselves, without preaching a crusade, as the best means of throwing away the few maravedis they may happen to gain by their hardships and courage. The worthy pilots, Francisco Martin Pinzon, mine own brother, Sancho Ruiz, Pedro Alonzo Niño, and Barto-

lemeo Roldan, are all now firmly tied to us by the ropes of the law; but should they happen to find a crusade at their end, all the saints in the calendar would scarce have influence to make them hesitate about loosening themselves from the agreement."

"I hold no one but myself bound to this object," returned Columbus, calmly. "Each man, friend Martin Alonzo, will be judged by his own deeds, and called on to fulfil his own vows. Of those who pledge nought, nought will be exacted, and nought given at the great final account of the human race. But what are the tidings of the Pinta, thine own vessel? Hath she been finally put into a condition to buffet the Atlantic?"

"As ever happeneth with a vessel pressed into the royal service, Señor, work hath gone on heavily, and things in general have not borne that merry activity which accompanieth the labour of those who toil of a free will, and for their own benefit."

"The silly mariners have toiled in their own behalf, without knowing it," observed Colum-

bus. "It is the duty of the ignorant to submit to be led by the more enlightened, and to be grateful for the advantages they derive from a borrowed knowledge, albeit it is obtained contrary to their own wishes."

"That is it, truly," added the prior; "else would the office of us churchmen be reduced to very narrow limits. Faith — faith in the Church — is the Christian's earliest and latest duty."

"This seemeth reasonable, excellent sirs," returned Master Alonzo, "though the ignorant find it difficult to comprehend matters that they do not understand. When a man fancieth himself condemned to an unheard-of death, he is little apt to see the benefit that lieth beyond the grave. Nevertheless, the Pinta is more nearly ready for the voyage than any other of our craft, and hath her crew engaged to a man, and that under contracts that will not permit much dispute before a notary."

"There remaineth only the Niña, then," added Columbus. "With her prepared, and

our religious duties observed, we may hope finally to commence the enterprise."

"Señor, you may. My brother, Vicente Yañez, hath finally consented to take charge of this little craft; and that which a Pinzon promiseth, a Pinzon performeth. She will be ready to depart with the Santa Maria and the Pinta; and Cathay must be distant indeed, if we do not reach it with one or the other of our vessels."

"This is right encouraging, neighbour Martin Alonzo," returned the friar, rubbing his hands with delight, "and I make no question all will come round in the end. What say the crones and loose talkers of Moguer, and of the other ports, touching the shape of the earth, and the chances of the Admiral's reaching the Indies, now-a-days?"

"They discourse much as they did, Fray Juan Perez, idly, and without knowledge. Although there is not a mariner in any of the havens who doth not admit that the upper sails, though so much the smallest, are the first

seen on the ocean, yet do they deny that this cometh of the shape of the earth, but, as they affirm, of the movements of the waters."

"Have none of them ever observed the shadows cast by the earth, in the eclipses of the moon?" asked Columbus, in his calm manner, though he smiled even in putting the question, as one smiles who, having dipped deeply into a natural problem himself, carelessly lays one of its more popular proofs before those who are less disposed to go beneath the surface. "Do they not see that these shadows are round,—and do they not know that a shadow which is round can only be cast by a body that is round?"

"This is conclusive, good Martin Alonzo," put in the prior; "and it ought to remove the doubts of the silliest gossip on the coast. Tell them to encircle their dwellings, beginning to the right, and see if, by following the walls, they do not return to the spot from which they started, coming in from the left."

"Ay, reverend prior, if we could bring our

distant voyage down to these familiar examples, there is not a crone in Moguer, or a courtier in Seville, that might not be made to comprehend the mystery. But it is one thing to state a problem fairly, and another to find those who can understand it. Now, I did give some such reasoning to the Alguiazil in Palos here, and the worthy Señor asked me if I expected to return from this voyage by the way of the lately captured town of Granada. I fancy that the easiest method of persuading these good people to believe that Cathay can be reached by the western voyage will be by going there and returning."

"Which we will shortly do, Master Martin Alonzo," observed Columbus, cheerfully. "But the time of our departure draweth near, and it is meet that none of us neglect the duties of religion. I commend thee to thy confessor, Señor Pinzon, and expect that all who sail with me in this great enterprise will receive the holy communion in my company before we quit the haven. This excellent prior will shrive Pedro de Muños and myself; and let

each man seek such other holy counsellor and monitor as hath been his practice."

With this intimation of his intention to pay a due regard to the rites of the Church before he departed,—rites that were seldom neglected in that day, — the conversation turned for the moment on the details of the preparations. After this the parties separated, and a few more days passed away in active exertions.

On the morning of Thursday, August the second, 1492, Columbus entered the private apartment of Fray Juan Perez, habited like a penitent, and with an air so devout, and yet so calm, that it was evident his thoughts were altogether bent on his own transgressions and on the goodness of God. The zealous priest was in waiting, and the great navigator knelt at the feet of him before whom Isabella had often knelt, in the fulfilment of the same solemnity. The religion of this extraordinary man was coloured by the habits and opinions of his age, as indeed, in a greater or less degree, must be the religion of every man; his confession, consequently, had that admixture

of deep piety with inconsistent error, that so often meets the moralist in his investigations into the philosophy of the human mind. The truth of this peculiarity will be seen by adverting to one or two of the admissions of the great navigator, as he laid before his ghostly counsellor the catalogue of his sins.

"Then, I fear, holy father," Columbus continued, after having made most of the usual confessions touching the more familiar weaknesses of the human race, "that my mind hath become too much exalted in this matter of the voyage, and that I may have thought myself more directly set apart by God for some good end than it might please his infinite knowledge and wisdom to grant."

"That would be a dangerous error, my son, and I carefully admonish thee against the evils of self-righteousness. That God selecteth his agents is beyond dispute; but it is a fearful error to mistake the impulses of self-love for the movements of his Divine Spirit! It is hardly safe for any who have not received the Church's ordination to deem themselves chosen vessels."

"I endeavour so to consider it, holy friar," answered Columbus, meekly; "and yet there is that within which constantly urgeth to this belief, be it a delusion, or come it directly from heaven. I strive, father, to keep the feeling in subjection; and most of all do I endeavour to see that it taketh a direction that may glorify the name of God, and serve the interests of his visible Church."

"This is well; and yet do I feel it a duty to admonish thee against too much credence in these inward impulses. So long as they tend solely to increase thy love for the Supreme Father of all, to magnify his holiness and glorify his nature, thou mayest be certain it is the offspring of good; but when self-exaltation seemeth to be its aim, beware the impulse, as thou wouldst eschew the dictation of the great father of evil."

"I so consider it. And, now having truly and sincerely disburthened my conscience, father, so far as in me lieth, may I hope for the Church's consolation, with its absolution?"

"Canst thou think of nought else, son, that

should not lie hid from before the keeper of all consciences?"

"My sins are many, holy prior, and cannot be too often or too keenly rebuked; but I do think that they may be fairly included in the general heads that I have endeavoured to recal."

"Hast thou nothing to charge thyself with, in connection with that sex that the devil as often useth as his tempters to evil, as the angels would fain employ them as the ministers of grace?"

"I have erred as a man, father; but do not my confessions already meet those sins?"

"Hast thou bethought thee of Doña Beatriz Enriquez?—of thy son Fernando, who tarrieth at this moment in our convent of La Rabida?"

Columbus bowed his head in submission, and the heavy sigh, amounting almost to a groan, that broke out of his bosom betrayed the weight of his momentary contrition.

"Thou sayest true, father; that is an offence which should never be forgotten, though so often shrived since its commission. Heap

on me the penance that I feel is due, and thou shalt see how a Christian can bend and kiss the rod that he is conscious of having merited."

"The spirit thus to do is all that the Church requireth; and thou art now bent on a service too important to her interests to be drawn aside from thy great intentions for any minor considerations. Still may not a minister of the altar overlook the offence. Thou wilt say a pater daily, on account of this great sin, for the next twenty days, all of which will be for the good of thy soul; after which the Church releaseth thee from this especial duty, as thou wilt then be drawing near to the land of Cathay, and may have occasion for all thy thoughts and efforts to effect thy object."

The worthy prior then proceeded to prescribe several light penances, most of which were confined to moderate increases of the daily duties of religion, after which he shrived the navigator. The turn of Luis came next, and more than once the prior smiled involuntarily as he listened to this hot-blooded and

impetuous youth, whose language irresistibly carried back his thoughts to the more meek, natural, and the more gentle admissions of the pure-minded Mercedes. The penance prescribed to Luis was not entirely free from severity, though, on the whole, the young man, who was not much addicted to the duties of the confessional, fancied himself well quit of the affair, considering the length of the account he was obliged to render, and the weight of the balance against him.

These duties performed in the persons of the two principal adventurers, Martin Alonzo Pinzon, and the ruder mariners of the expedition, appeared before different priests, and gave in the usual reckoning of their sins. After this came a scene that was strictly characteristic of the age, and which would be impressive and proper, in all times and seasons, for men about to embark in an undertaking of a result so questionable.

High mass was said in the chapel of the convent, and Columbus received the consecrated bread from the hands of Fray Juan

Perez, in humble reliance on the all-seeing providence of God, and with a devout dependence on his fostering protection. All who were about to embark with the Admiral imitated his example, communing in his company; for that was a period when the wire-drawn conclusions of man had not yet begun so far to supplant the faith and practices of the earlier Church as to consider its rites as the end of religion, but he was still content to regard them as its means. Many a rude sailor, whose ordinary life might not have been either saintly or even free from severe censure, knelt that day at the altar, in devout dependence on God, with feelings, for the moment, that at least placed him on the highway to grace; and it would be presumptuous to suppose that the omniscient Being to whom his offerings were made did not regard his ignorance with commiseration, and even look upon his superstition with pity. We scoff at the prayers of those who are in danger, without reflecting that they are a homage to the power of God, and are apt to fancy that these passages in devotion

are mere mockery, because the daily mind and the ordinary life are not always elevated to the same standard of godliness and purity. It would be more humble to remember the general infirmities of the race,—to recollect that, as none are perfect, the question is reduced to one of degree, — and to bear in mind that the Being who reads the heart may accept of any devout petitions, even though they come from those who are not disposed habitually to walk in his laws. These passing but pious emotions are the workings of the Spirit, since good can come from no other source; and it is as unreasonable as it is irreverent to imagine that the Deity will disregard altogether the effects of his own grace, however humble.

Whatever may have been the general disposition of most of the communicants on this occasion, there is little doubt that there knelt at the altar of La Rabida that day one, in the person of the great navigator himself, who, as far as the eye could perceive, lived habitually in profound deference to the dogmas of religion, and who paid an undeviating respect to

all its rites. Columbus was not strictly a devotee; but a quiet, deeply-seated enthusiasm, which had taken the direction of Christianity, pervaded his moral system, and at all times disposed him to look up to the protecting hand of the Deity, and to expect its aid. The high aims that he entertained for the future have already been mentioned, and there is little doubt of his having persuaded himself that he had been set apart by Providence as the instrument it designed to employ in making the great discovery on which his mind was so intently engaged, as well as in accomplishing other and ulterior purposes. If indeed an overruling power directs all the events of this world, who will presume to say that this conviction of Columbus was erroneous, now that it has been justified by the result? That he felt this sentiment sustaining his courage, and constantly urging him onward, is so much additional evidence in favour of his impression; since, under such circumstances, nothing is more probable than that an earnest belief in his destiny would be one of the means most

likely to be employed by a supernatural power in inducing its human agent to accomplish the work for which he had actually been selected.

Let this be as it might, there is no doubt that Colon observed the rites of the Church on the occasion named, with a most devout reliance on the truth of his mission, and with the brightest hopes as to its successful termination. Not so, however, with all of his intended followers. Their minds had wavered from time to time as the preparations advanced; and the last month had seen them eager to depart, and dejected with misgivings and doubts. Although there were days of hope and brightness, despondency perhaps prevailed, and this so much the more because the apprehensions of mothers, wives, and of those who felt an equally tender interest in the mariners, though less inclined to avow it openly, were thrown into the scale by the side of their own distrust. Gold, unquestionably, was the great aim of their wishes, and there were moments when visions of inexhaustible mines and of Oriental treasures floated before their imaginations,—at

which times none could be more eager to engage in the mysterious undertaking, or more ready to risk their lives and hopes on its success. But these were fleeting impressions, and, as has just been said, despondency was the prevalent feeling among those who were about to embark. It heightened the devotion of the communicants, and threw a gloom over the chastened sobriety of the altar, that weighed heavily on the hearts of most assembled there.

"Our people seem none of the most cheerful, Señor Almirante," said Luis, as they left the convent-chapel in company; "and, if truth must be spoken, one could wish to set forth on an expedition of this magnitude, better sustained by merry hearts and smiling countenances."

"Dost thou imagine, young Count, that he hath the firmest mind who weareth the most smiling visage, or that the heart is weak because the countenance is sobered. These honest mariners bethink them of their sins, and no doubt are desirous that so holy an enterprise

be not tainted by the corruption of their own hearts, but rather purified and rendered fitting, by their longings to obey the will of God. I trust, Luis"— intercourse had given Columbus a sort of paternal interest in the welfare of the young grandee, that lessened the distance made by rank between them —"I trust, Luis, thou art not, altogether, without these pious longings in thine own person."

"By San Pedro, my new patron! Señor Almirante, I think more of Mercedes de Valverde, than of aught else, in this great affair. She is my polar star, my religion, my Cathay. Go on, in Heaven's name, and discover what thou wilt, whether it be Cipango or the farthest Indies; beard the great Khan on his throne, and I will follow in thy train, with a poor lance and an indifferent sword, swearing that the maid of Castile hath no equal, and ransacking the East, merely to prove in the face of the universe, that she is peerless, let her rivals come from what part of the earth they may."

Although Columbus permitted his grave

countenance slightly to relax at this rhapsody, he did not the less deem it prudent to rebuke the spirit in which it was uttered.

"I grieve, my young friend," he said, "to find that thou hast not the feelings proper for one who is engaged, as it might be, in a work of Heaven's own ordering. Canst thou not foresee the long train of mighty and wonderful events that are likely to follow from this voyage—the spread of religion, through the holy Church; the conquest of distant empires, with their submission to the sway of Castile; the settling of disputed points in science and philosophy, and the attainment of inexhaustible wealth; with the last and most honourable consequence of all, the recovery of the sepulchre of the Son of God from the hands of the infidels!"

"No doubt, Señor Colon—no doubt, I see them all, but I see the Doña Mercedes at their end. What care I for gold, who already possess—or shall so soon possess—more than I need;—what is the extension of the sway of Castile to me, who can never be its king; and

as for the holy sepulchre, give me but Mercedes, and, like my ancestors that are gone, I am ready to break a lance with the stoutest infidel who ever wore a turban, be it in that, or in any other quarrel. In short, Señor Almirante, lead on; and though we go forth with different objects and different hopes, doubt not that they will lead us to the same goal. I feel that you ought to be supported in this great and noble design, and it matters not what may bring me in your train."

"Thou art a mad-brained youth, Luis, and must be humoured, if it were only for the sake of the sweet and pious young maiden who seemeth to engross all thy thoughts."

"You have seen her, Señor, and can say whether she be not worthy to occupy the minds of all the youth of Spain."

"She is fair, and virtuous, and noble, and a zealous friend of the voyage. These are all rare merits, and thou mayst be pardoned for thy enthusiasm in her behalf. But, forget not, that to win her, thou must first win a sight of Cathay."

"In the reality, you must mean, Señor Almirante; for, with the mind's eye, I see it keenly, constantly, and see little else, with Mercedes standing on its shores, smiling a welcome; and, by St. Paul! sometimes beckoning me on with that smile that fires the soul with its witchery, even while it subdues the temper with its modesty. The blessed Maria send us a wind, right speedily, that we may quit this irksome river, and wearying convent!"

Columbus made no answer; for, while he had all consideration for a lover's impatience, his thoughts turned to subjects too grave, to be long amused even by a lover's follies.

CHAPTER III.

Nor Zayda weeps him only,
But all that dwell between
The great Alhambra's palace walls
And springs of Albaiein.

Bryant's Translations.

The instant of departure at length arrived. The moment so long desired by the Genoese was at hand, and years of poverty, neglect, and of procrastination, were all forgotten at that blessed hour; or, if they returned in any manner to the constant memory, it was no longer with the bitterness of hope deferred. The navigator, at last, saw himself in the possession of the means of achieving the first great object for which he had lived the last fifteen years, with the hope, in perspective, of making the success of his present adventure the stepping-stone towards effecting the conquest of

the holy sepulchre. While those around him were looking with astonishment at the limited means with which ends so great were to be attained, or were struck aghast at the apparent temerity of an undertaking that seemed to defy the laws of Nature, and to set at nought the rules of Providence, he had grown more tranquil as the time for sailing drew nearer, and his mind was oppressed merely by a feeling of intense, but of sobered, delight. Fray Juan Perez whispered to Luis, that he could best liken the joy of the Admiral to the chastened rapture of a Christian who was about to quit a world of woe, to enter on the untasted, but certain, fruition of blessed immortality.

This, however, was far from being the state of mind of all in Palos. The embarkation took place in the course of the afternoon of the 2nd of August, it being the intention of the pilots to carry the vessels that day to a point off the town of Huelva, where the position was more favourable to making sail, than when anchored in front of Palos. The distance was trifling, but it was the commencement of the

voyage, and, to many, it was like snapping the cords of life, to make even this brief movement. Columbus, himself, was one of the last to embark, having a letter to send to the court, and other important duties to discharge. At length he quitted the convent, and, accompanied by Luis and the prior, he too took his way to the beach. The short journey was silent, for each of the party was deeply plunged in meditation. Never before this hour did the enterprise seem so perilous and uncertain to the excellent Franciscan. Columbus was carefully recalling the details of his preparations, while Luis was thinking of the maid of Castile, as he was wont to term Mercedes, and of the many weary days that must elapse before he could hope to see her again.

The party stopped on the shore, in waiting for a boat to arrive, at a place where they were removed from any houses. There Fray Juan Perez took his leave of the two adventurers. The long silence that all three had maintained was more impressive than any ordinary discourse could have been; but it was now necessary to break it.

The prior was deeply affected, and it was some little time before he could even trust his voice to speak.

"Señor Christoval," he at length commenced, "it is now many years since thou first appeared at the gate of Santa Maria de Rabida —years of friendship and pleasure have they proved to me."

"It is full seven, Fray Juan Perez," returned Columbus,—"seven weary years have they proved to me, as a solicitor for employment;—years of satisfaction, father, in all that concerneth thee. Think not that I can ever forget the hour when, leading Diego, houseless, impoverished, wanderers, journeying on foot, I stopped to tax the convent's charity for refreshment! The future is in the hands of God, but the past is imprinted here,"—laying his hand on his heart—"and can never be forgotten. Thou hast been my constant friend, holy prior, and that, too, when it was no credit to favour the nameless Genoese. Should my estimation ever change in men's opinions—"

"Nay, Señor Almirante, it hath changed al-

ready,"—eagerly interrupted the prior. "Hast thou not the commission of the Queen — the support of Don Fernando — the presence of this young noble, though still as an incognito— the wishes of all the learned? Dost thou not go forth, on this great voyage, carrying with thee more of our hopes than of our fears?"

"So far as thou art concerned, dear Juan Perez, this may be so. I feel that I have all thy best wishes for success; I know that I shall have thy prayers. Few in Spain, notwithstanding, will think of Colon with respect or hope, while we are wandering on the great desert of the ocean, beyond a very narrow circle. I fear me that, even at this moment, when the means of learning the truth of our theories is in actual possession, when we stand, as it might be, on the very threshold of the great portal which opens upon the Indies, that few believe in our chances of success."

"Thou hast Doña Isabella of thy side, Señor!"

"And Doña Mercedes!" put in Luis, "not to speak of my decided and true-hearted aunt!"

"I ask but a few brief months, Señores," returned Columbus, his face turned to heaven with uncovered head, his grey hair floating in the wind, and his eye kindling with the light of enthusiasm,—"a few short months, that will pass away untold with the happy—that even the miserable may find supportable, but which to us will seem ages, must now dispose of this question. Prior, I have often quitted the shore feeling that I carried my life in my hand, conscious of all the dangers of the ocean, and as much expecting death as a happy return; but, at this glorious moment no doubts beset me; as for life, I know it is in the keeping of God's care; as for success, I feel it is in God's wisdom!"

"These are comfortable sentiments, at so serious a moment, Señor, and I devoutly hope the end will justify them. But, yonder is thy boat, and we must now part. Señor, my son, thou knowest that my spirit will be with thee in this mighty undertaking."

"Holy prior, remember me in thy prayers. I am weak, and have need of this support. I

trust much to the efficacy of thy intercessions, aided by those of thy pious brotherhood. Thou wilt bestow on us a few masses?"

"Doubt us not, my friend; all that La Rabida can do with the blessed Virgin, or the saints, shall be exercised, without ceasing, in thy behalf. It is not given to man to foresee the events that are controlled by Providence; and, though we deem this enterprise of thine so certain, and so reasonable, it may nevertheless fail."

"It may *not* fail, father; God hath thus far directed it, and he will not permit it to fail."

"We know not, Señor Colon; our wisdom is but as a grain of mustard-seed among the sands of this shore, as compared with his inscrutable designs. I was about to say, as it is possible thou mayst return a disappointed, a defeated man, that thou wilt still find the gate of Santa Maria open to thee; since, in our eyes, it is as meritorious to attempt nobly, as it is often, in the eyes of others, to achieve successfully."

"I understand thee, holy prior; and the

cup and the morsel bestowed on the young Diego, were not more grateful than this proof of thy friendship! I would not depart without thy blessing."

"Kneel, then, Señor; for, in this act it will not be Juan Perez de Marchena that will speak and pronounce, but the minister of God and the Church. Even these sands will be no unworthy spot to receive such an advantage."

The eyes of both Columbus and the prior were suffused with tears, for at that moment the heart of each was touched with the emotions natural to a moment so solemn. The first loved the last because he had proved himself a friend, when friends were few and timid; and the worthy monk had some such attachment for the great navigator as men are apt to feel for those they have cherished. Each, also, respected and appreciated the other's motives; and there was a bond of union in their common reverence for the Christian religion. Columbus kneeled on the sands, and received the benediction of his friend with the meek submission of faith, and with some such feelings

of reverence as those with which a pious son would have listened to a blessing pronounced by a natural father.

"And thou, young lord," resumed Fray Juan Perez, with a husky voice,—"thou, too, wilt be none the worse for the prayers of an aged churchman."

Like most of that age, Luis, in the midst of his impetuous feelings, and youthful propensities, had enshrined in his heart an image of the son of God, and entertained an habitual respect for holy things. He kneeled without hesitation, and listened to the trembling words of the priest with thankfulness and respect.

"Adieu, holy prior," said Columbus, squeezing his friend's hand. "Thou hast befriended me when others held aloof; but I trust in God that the day is not now distant, when those who have ever shown confidence in my predictions, will cease to feel uneasiness at the mention of my name. Forget us in all things but thy prayers, for a few short months; and then expect tidings that, of a verity, shall exalt Castile to a point of renown which will render

this Conquest of Granada but an incident of passing interest amid the glory of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella!"

This was not said boastfully, but with the quiet earnestness of one who saw a truth that was concealed from most eyes, and this with an intensity so great, that the effect on his moral vision produced a confidence equalling that which is the fruit of the evidence of the senses in ordinary men. The prior understood him, and the assurance thus given cheered the mind of the worthy Franciscan long after the departure of his friend. They embraced and separated.

By this time the boat of Columbus had reached the shore. As the navigator moved slowly towards it, a youthful female rushed wildly past him and Luis, and regardless of their presence, she threw her arms around a young mariner who had quitted the boat to meet her, and sobbed for a minute on his bosom in uncontrollable agony, or as women weep in the first outbreak of their emotions.

"Come, then, Pepe," the young wife at

length said, hurriedly, and with low earnestness, as one speaks who would fain persuade herself that denial was impossible,—"come, Pepe; thy boy hath wept for thee, and thou hast pushed this matter already much too far."

"Nay, Monica," returned the husband, glancing his eye at Columbus, who was already near enough to hear his words,—"thou knowest it is by no wish of mine that I am to sail on this unknown voyage. Gladly would I abandon it, but the orders of the Queen are too strong for a poor mariner like me, and they must be obeyed."

"This is foolish, Pepe," returned the woman, pulling at her husband's doublet to drag him from the water-side; "I have had enough of this — sufficient to break my heart. Come, then, and look again upon thy boy."

"Thou dost not see that the Admiral is near, Monica, and we are showing him disrespect."

The habitual deference that was paid by the low to the high, induced the woman for a moment to pause. She looked imploringly at

Columbus; her fine dark eyes became eloquent with the feelings of a wife and mother, and then she addressed the great navigator himself.

"Señor," she said eagerly, "you can have no further need of Pepe. He hath helped to carry your vessels to Huelva, and now his wife and boy call for him at home."

Columbus was touched with the manner of the woman, which was not entirely without a show of that wavering of reason which is apt to accompany excessive grief, and he answered her less strongly than, at a moment so critical, he might otherwise have been disposed to do to one who was inciting to disobedience.

"Thy husband is honoured in being chosen to be my companion in the great voyage," he said. "Instead of bewailing his fate, thou wouldst act more like a brave mariner's wife in exulting in his good fortune."

"Believe him not, Pepe; he speaketh under the Evil One's advice to tempt thee to destruction. He hath talked blasphemy, and belied the word of God, by saying that the world is

round, and that one may sail east by steering west, that he might ruin thee and others by tempting ye all to follow him !"

"And why should I do this, good woman?" demanded the Admiral. "What have I to gain by the destruction of thy husband, or by the destruction of any of his comrades?"

"I know not—I care not—Pepe is all to me, and he shall not go with you, on this mad and wicked voyage. No good can come of a journey that is begun by belying the truths of God !"

"And what particular evil dost thou dread in this more than in another voyage, that thou thus hangest upon thy husband, and usest such discourse to one who beareth their Highnesses' authority for that he doeth. Thou knewest he was a mariner when thou wert wedded, and yet thou wouldst fain prevent him from serving the Queen, as becometh his station and duty."

"He may go against the Moor, or the Portuguese, or the people of Inghleterra; but I would not that he voyage in the service of the

Prince of Darkness. Why tell us that the earth is round, Señor, when our eyes show that it is flat? And if round, how can a vessel that hath descended the side of the earth for days ever return? The sea doth not flow upward, neither can a caravel mount the waterfall. And when thou hast wandered about for months in the vacant ocean, in what manner wilt thou, and those with thee, ever discover the direction that must be taken to return whence ye all sailed? Oh! Señor, Palos is but a little town, and once lost sight of in such a confusion of ideas, it will never be regained."

"Idle and childish as this may seem," observed Columbus, turning quietly to Luis, "it is as reasonable as much that I have been doomed to hear from the learned during the last sixteen years. When the night of ignorance obscures the mind, the thoughts conjure arguments a thousand times more vain and frivolous than the phenomena of nature that it fancies so unreasonable. I will try the effect of religion on this woman, converting her pre-

sent feelings on that head, from an enemy into an ally.—Monica," calling her kindly and familiarly by name, "art thou a Christian?"

"Blessed Maria! Señor Almirante, what else should I be? Dost think Pepe would have married a Moorish girl?"

"Listen, then, to me, and learn how unlike a believer thou conductest thyself. The Moor is not the only infidel, but this earth groaneth with the burthen of their numbers, and of their sins. The sands on this shore are not as numerous as the unbelievers in the single kingdom of Cathay; for, as yet, God hath allotted but a small portion of the earth to those who have faith in the mediation of his Son. Even the sepulchre of Christ is yet retained by infidel hands."

"This have I heard, Señor; and 'tis a thousand pities the faith is so weak in those who have vowed to obey the law, that so crying an evil hath never been cured!"

"Hast thou not been told that such is to be the fate of the world for a time, but that light will dawn when the word shall pass, like the

sound of trumpets, into the ears of infidels, and when the earth itself shall be but one vast temple filled with the praises of God, the love of his name, and obedience to his will?"

"Señor, the good fathers of La Rabida, and our own parish priests, often comfort us with these hopes."

"And hast thou seen nought of late to encourage that hope, to cause thee to think that God is mindful of his people, and that new light is beginning to burst on the darkness of Spain?"

"Pepe, his Excellency must mean the late miracle at the convent, where they say that real tears were seen to fall from the eyes of the image of the holy Maria, as she gazed at the child that lay on her bosom."

"I mean not that," interrupted Columbus, a little sternly, though he crossed himself, even while he betrayed dissatisfaction at the allusion to a miracle that was much too vulgar for his manly understanding,—"I mean no such questionable wonder, which it is permitted us to believe or not, as it may be supported by the

Church's authority. Can thy faith and zeal point to no success of the two sovereigns, in which the power of God, as exercised to the advancement of the faith, hath been made signally apparent to believers?"

"He meaneth the expulsion of the Moor, Pepe!" the woman exclaimed, glancing quickly towards her husband with a look of pleasure, "that hath happened of late, they say, by conquering the city of Granada; into which place they tell me, Doña Isabella hath marched in triumph."

"In that conquest thou seest the commencement of the great acts of our time. Granada hath now its churches; and the distant land of Cathay will shortly follow her example. These are the doings of the Lord, foolish woman; and in holding back thy husband from this great undertaking, thou hinderest him from purchasing a signal reward in heaven, and may unwittingly be the instrument of casting a curse, instead of a blessing, on that very boy, whose image now filleth thy thoughts more than that of his Maker and Redeemer."

The woman appeared bewildered, first looking at the Admiral, and then at her husband, after which she bowed her head low, and devoutly crossed herself. Recovering from this self-abasement, she again turned towards Columbus, demanding earnestly,—

"And you, Señor; do you sail with the wish and hope of serving God?"

"Such is my principal aim, good woman. I call on Heaven itself to witness the truth of what I say. May my voyage prosper only as I tell thee nought but truth!"

"And you, too, Señor?" turning quickly to Luis de Bobadilla; "is it to serve God that you also go on this unusual voyage?"

"If not at the orders of God himself, my good woman, it is, at least, at the bidding of an angel!"

"Dost thou think it is so, Pepe? Have we been thus deceived, and has so much evil been said of the Admiral and his motives wrongfully?"

"What hath been said?" quietly demanded

Columbus. "Speak freely; thou hast nought to dread from my displeasure."

"Señor, you have your enemies as well as another, and the wives, and mothers, and the betrothed of Palos, have not been slow to give vent to their feelings. In the first place they say that you are poor."

"That is so true and manifest, good woman, it would be idle to deny it. Is poverty a crime at Palos?"

"The poor are little respected, Señor, in all this region. I know not why, for to me we seem to be as the rest, but few respect us. Then they say, Señor, that you are not a Castilian, but a Genoese."

"This is also true; is that, too, a crime among the mariners of Moguer, who ought to prize a people as much renowned for their deeds on the sea as those of the superb republic?"

"I know not, Senor; but many hold it to be a disadvantage not to belong to Spain, and particularly to Castile, which is the country of

Dona Isabella herself; and how can it be as honourable to be a Genoese as to be a Spaniard? I should like it better were Pepe to sail with one who is a Spaniard, and that, too, of Palos or Moguer."

"Thy argument is ingenious, if not conclusive," returned Columbus smiling, the only outward exhibition of feeling he betrayed; "but cannot one who is both poor and a Genoese serve God?"

"No doubt, Señor; and I think better of this voyage since I know your motive, and since I have seen you and spoken with you. Still, it is a great sacrifice for a young wife to let her husband sail on an expedition so distrusted, and he the father of her only boy!"

"Here is a young noble, an only son, a lover, and that too of impetuous feelings, an only child withal, rich, honoured, and able to go whither he will, who not only embarketh with me, but embarketh by the consent,—nay, I had better say, by the orders of his mistress!"

"Is this so, Senor?" the wife asked eagerly.

"So true, my good woman, that my greatest hopes depend on this voyage. Did I not tell thee that I went at the bidding of an angel?"

"Ah! these young lords have seductive tongues! But, Señor Almirante, since such is your quality, they say, moreover, that to you this voyage can only bring honours and good, while it may bring misery and death on your followers. Poor and unknown, it maketh you a high officer of the Queen; and some think that the Venetian galleys will be none the more heavily freighted, should you meet them on the high seas."

"And in what can all this harm thy husband? I go whithersoever he goeth, share his dangers, and expose life for life with him. If there is gold gained by the adventure, he will not be forgotten; and if heaven is made any nearer to us by our dangers and hardships, Pepe will not be a loser. At the last great reckoning, woman, we shall not be asked who is poor, or who is a Genoese."

"This is true, Señor; and yet it is hard for a young wife to part from her husband.

Dost thou wish, in truth, to sail with the Admiral, Pepe?"

"It matters little with me, Monica: I am commanded to serve the Queen, and we mariners have no right to question her authority. Now I have heard his Excellency's discourse, I think less of the affair than before."

"If God is really to be served in this voyage," continued the woman with dignity, "thou shouldst not be backward more than another, my husband. Señor, will you suffer Pepe to pass the night with his family, on condition that he goeth on board the Santa Maria in the morning?"

"What certainty have I that this condition will be respected?"

"Señor, we are both Christians, and serve the same God,—have been redeemed by the same Saviour."

"This is true, and I will confide in it. Pepe, thou canst remain until the morning, when I shall expect thee at thy station. There will be oarsmen enough without thee."

The woman looked her thanks, and Colum-

bus thought he read an assurance of good faith in her noble Spanish manner and lofty look. As some trifling preparations were to be made before the boat could quit the shore, the Admiral and Luis paced the sands the while, engaged in deep discourse.

"This hath been a specimen of what I have had to overcome and endure, in order to obtain even yonder humble means for effecting the good designs of Providence," observed Columbus mournfully, though he spoke without acrimony. "It is a crime to be poor — to be a Genoese — to be aught else than the very thing that one's judges and masters fancy themselves to be! The day will come, Conde de Llera, when Genoa shall think herself in no manner disgraced in having giving birth to Christofero Colombo, and when your proud Castile will be willing to share with her in the dishonour! Thou little knowest, young lord, how far thou art on the road to renown, and towards high deeds, in having been born noble, and the master of large possessions. Thou seest me here, a man already stricken in years, with a

head whitened by time and sufferings, and yet am I only on the threshold of the undertaking that is to give my name a place amongst those of the men who have served God, and advanced the welfare of their fellow-creatures."

"Is not this the course of things, Señor, throughout the earth?—Do not those who find themselves placed beneath the level of their merits, struggle to rise to the condition to which Nature intended them to belong, while those whom Fortune hath favoured through their ancestors, are too often content to live on honours that they have not themselves won? I see nought in this but the nature of man, and the course of the world."

"Thou art right, Luis; but philosophy and fact are different matters. We may reason calmly on principles, when their application in practice causeth much pain. Thou hast a frank and manly nature, young man; one that dreadeth neither the gibe of the Christian nor the lance of the Moor, and wilt answer to any in fearlessness and truth. A Castilian

thyself, dost *thou*, too, really think one of thy kingdom better than one of Genoa?"

"Not when he of Genoa is Christoval Colon, Señor, and he of Castile is only Luis de Bobadilla," answered the young man, laughing.

"Nay, I will not be denied—hast thou any such notion as this, which the wife of Pepe hath so plainly avowed?"

"What will you, Señor Christoval?—Man is the same in Spain, that he is among the Italians, or the English. Is it not his besetting sin to think good of himself and evil of his neighbour?"

"A plain question, that is loyally put, may not be answered with a truism, Luis."

"Nor a civil, honest reply confounded with one that is evasive. We of Castile are humble and most devout Christians, by the same reason that we think ourselves faultless, and the rest of mankind notable sinners. By San Iago, of blessed faith and holy memory! it is enough to make a people vain, to have produced such a

Queen as Doña Isabella, and such a maiden as Mercedes de Valverde!"

"This is double loyalty, for it is being true to the Queen and to thy mistress. With this must I satisfy myself, even though it be no answer. But Castilian though I am not, even the Guzmans have not ventured on the voyage to Cathay, and the House of Trastamara may yet be glad to acknowledge its indebtedness to a Genoese. God hath no respect to worldly condition, or worldly boundaries, in choosing his agents, for most of the saints were despised Hebrews, while Jesus, himself, came of Nazareth. We shall see, we shall see, young lord, what three months will reveal to the admiration of mankind."

"Señor Almirante, I hope and pray it may be the island of Cipango, and the realms of the great Khan; should it not be so, we are men who can not only bear our toils, but who can bear our disappointments."

"Of disappointments in this matter, Don Luis, I look for none,—now that I have the royal faith of Isabella, and these good caravels

to back me; the drudge who saileth from Madeira to Lisbon is not more certain of gaining his port, than I am certain of gaining Cathay."

"No doubt, Señor Colon, that what any navigator can do, you can do and will perform; nevertheless, disappointment would seem to be the lot of man, and it might be well for all of us to be prepared to meet it."

"The sun that is just sinking beyond yon hill, Luis, is not plainer before my eyes than this route to the Indies. I have seen it these seventeen years, distinct as the vessels in the river, bright as the polar star, and, I make little doubt, as faithfully. It is well to talk of disappointments, since they are the lot of man; and who can know this better than one that hath been led on by false hopes during all the better years of his life; now encouraged by princes, statesmen, and churchmen; and now derided and scoffed at, as a vain projector, that hath neither reason nor fact to sustain him!"

"By my new patron, San Pedro! Señor Almirante, but you have led a most grievous life for this last age, or so. The next three months will, indeed, be months of moment to you."

"Thou little knowest the calmness of conviction and confidence, Luis," returned Columbus, "if thou fanciest any doubts beset me as the hour of trial approacheth. This day is the happiest I have known for many a weary year; for, though the preparations are not great, and our barks are but slight, and of trifling bulk, yonder lie the means through which a light, that hath long been hid, is about to break upon the world, and to raise Castile to an elevation surpassing that of any other Christian nation."

"Thou must regret, Señor Colon, that it hath not been Genoa, thy native land, that is now about to receive this great boon, after having merited it by generous and free gifts, in behalf of this great voyage."

"This hath not been the least of my sor-

rows, Luis. It is hard to desert one's own country, and to seek new connections, as life draweth to a close, though we mariners, perhaps, feel the tie less than those who never quit the land. But Genoa would have none of me; and if the child is bound to love and honour the parent, so is the parent equally bound to protect and foster the child. When the last forgets its duty, the first is not to be blamed if it seeks support wherever it may be found. There are limits to every human duty; those we owe to God alone, never ceasing to require their fulfilment, and our unceasing attention. Genoa hath proved but a stern mother to me; and though nought could induce me to raise a hand against her, she hath no longer any claims on my service. Besides, when the object in view is the service of God, it mattereth little with which of his creatures we league as instruments. One cannot easily hate the land of his birth, but injustice may lead him to cease to love it. The tie is mutual, and when the country ceaseth to protect person, character, property, or rights, the subject

is liberated from all his duties. If allegiance goeth with protection, so should protection go with allegiance. Doña Isabella is now my mistress, and, next to God, her will I serve, and serve only. Castile is henceforth my country."

At this moment it was announced that the pinnace waited, and the two adventurers immediately embarked.

It must have required all the deep and fixed convictions of an ardent temperament, to induce Columbus to rejoice that he had at length obtained the means of satisfying his longings for discovery, when he came coolly to consider what those means were. The names of his vessels, the Santa Maria, the Pinta, and the Niña, have already been mentioned, and some allusions have been made to their size and construction. Still, it may aid the reader in forming his opinions of the character of this great enterprise, if we give a short sketch of the vessels, more especially that in which Columbus and Luis de Bobadilla were now received. She was, of course, the Santa Maria, a ship of

nearly twice the burthen of the craft next her in size. This vessel had been prepared with more care than the others, and some attention had been paid to the dignity and comfort of the admiral she was destined to carry. Not only was she decked in, but a poop, or round-house, was constructed on her quarter-deck, in which he had his berth. No proper notion can be obtained of the appearance of the Santa Maria, from the taunt-rigged, symmetrical, and low-sterned ships of the present time: for, though the Santa Maria had both a poop and top-gallant-forecastle, as they would be termed to-day, neither was constructed in the snug and unobtrusive manner that is now used. The poop, or round-house, was called a castle, to which it had some fancied resemblance, while the top-gallant-forecastle, in which most of the people lived, was out of proportion large, rose like a separate structure on the bows of the vessel, and occupied about a third of the deck, from forward aft. To those who never saw the shipping that was used throughout Europe, a century since, it will not be very obvious

how vessels so small could rise so far above the water in safety: but this difficulty may be explained; many very old ships, that had some of the peculiarities of this construction, existing within the memory of man, and a few having fallen under our own immediate inspection. The bearings of these vessels were at the loaded water-lines, or very little above them, and they tumbled-home in a way to reduce their beams on their poop decks nearly if not quite a fourth. By these precautions, their great height out of the water was less dangerous than might otherwise have been the case; and as they were uniformly short ships, possessing the advantages of lifting easily forward, and were, moreover, low-waisted, they might be considered safe in a sea, rather than the reverse. Being so short, too, they had great beam for their tonnage, which, if not an element of speed, was at least one of security. Although termed ships, these vessels were not rigged in the manner of the ships of the present day, their standing spars being relatively longer than those now in use, while their upper

or shifting spars, were much less numerous, and much less important than those which now point upwards, like needles, towards the clouds. Neither had a ship necessarily the same number of spars in the fifteenth century, as belong to a ship in the nineteenth. The term itself, as it was used in all the southern countries of Europe, being directly derived from the Latin word *navis*, was applied rather as a generic than as a distinctive term, and by no means inferred any particular construction, or particular rig. The caravel was a ship, in this sense, though not strictly so, perhaps, when we descend to the more minute classification of seamen.

Much stress has been justly laid on the fact, that two of the vessels in this extraordinary enterprise were undecked. In that day, when most sea voyages were made in a direction parallel to the main coasts, and when even those that extended to the islands occupied but a very few days, vessels were seldom far from the land; and it was the custom of the mariners,—a practice that has extended to our own times

in the southern seas of Europe,—to seek a port at the approach of bad weather. Under such circumstances, decks were by no means as essential, either for the security of the craft, the protection of the cargo, or the comfort of the people, as in those cases in which the full fury of the elements must be encountered. Nevertheless, the reader is not to suppose a vessel entirely without any upper covering, because she was not classed among those that were decked; even such caravels, when used on the high seas, usually possessing quarter-decks and forecastles, with connecting gang-ways; depending on tarpaulins, and other similar preventives, to exclude the wash of the sea from injuring their cargoes.

After all these explanations, however, it must be conceded that the preparations for the great undertaking of Columbus, while the imaginations of landsmen probably aggravate their incompleteness, strike the experienced seaman as altogether inadequate to its magnitude and risks. That the mariners of the day deemed them positively insufficient is impro-

bable, for men as accustomed to the ocean as the Pinzons, would not have volunteered to risk their vessel, their money, and their persons, in an expedition that did not possess the ordinary means of security.

CHAPTER IV.

O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,
Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
Survey our empire, and behold our home.

BYRON.

As Columbus sought his apartment soon after he reached the deck of the Holy Maria, Luis had no further opportunity to converse with him that night. He occupied a part of the same room, it is true, under the assumed appellation of the Admiral's secretary; but the great navigator was so much engaged with duties necessary to be discharged previously to sailing, that he could not be interrupted, and the young man paced the narrow limits of the deck until near midnight, thinking, as usual,

of Mercedes, and of his return, when, seeking his mattress, he found Columbus already buried in a deep sleep.

The following day was Friday; and it is worthy of remark, that the greatest and most successful voyage that has ever occurred on this globe, was commenced on a day of the week that seamen have long deemed to be so inauspicious to nautical enterprises, that they have often deferred sailing in order to avoid the unknown but dreaded consequences.. Luis was among the first who appeared again on deck, and casting his eyes upward, he perceived that the Admiral was already afoot, and in possession of the summit of the high poop, or castle, whose narrow limits, indeed, were deemed sacred to the uses of the privileged, answering, in this particular, to the more extended promenade of the modern quarter-deck. Here it was that he, who directed the movements of a squadron, overlooked its evolutions, threw out his signals, made his astronomical observations, and sought his recreation in the open air. The whole space on board the Santa

Maria might have been some fifteen feet in one direction, and not quite as much in the other, making a convenient look-out, more from its exclusion and retirement than from its dimensions.

As soon as the Admiral—or Don Christoval, as he was now termed by the Spaniards, since his appointment to his present high rank, which gave him the rights and condition of a noble—as soon as Don Christoval caught a glance of Luis's eye, he made a sign for the young man to ascend, and take a position at his side. Although the expedition was so insignificant in numbers and force, not equalling, in the latter particular, the power of a single modern sloop of war, the authority of the Queen, the gravity and mien of Columbus himself, and, most of all, its own mysterious and unwonted object, had from the first thrown around it a dignity that was disproportioned to its visible means. Accustomed to control the passions of turbulent men, and aware of the great importance of impressing his followers with a sense of his high station and influence with the Court,

Columbus had kept much aloof from familiar intercourse with his subordinates, acting principally through the Pinzons and the other commanders, lest he might lose some portion of that respect which he foresaw would be necessary to his objects. It needed not his long experience to warn him that men crowded together in so small a space, could only be kept in their social or professional stations by the most rigid observance of forms and decorum, and he had observed a due attention to these great requisites, in prescribing the manner in which his own personal service should be attended to, and his personal dignity supported. This is one of the great secrets of the discipline of a ship; for they who are incapable of reasoning can be made to feel, and no man is apt to despise him who is well entrenched behind the usages of deference and reserve. We see daily the influence of an appellation or a commission, even the turbulent submitting to its authority, when they might resist the same lawful commands issuing from an apparently less elevated source.

"Thou wilt keep much near my person, Señor Gutierrez," said the Admiral, using the feigned name which Luis affected to conceal under that of Pedro de Muños, as he knew a ship was never safe from eaves-droppers, and was willing that the young noble should pass as the gentleman of the King's bedchamber; "this is our station, and here we must remain much of our time, until God, in his holy and wise providence, shall have opened the way for us to Cathay, and brought us near the throne of the Great Khan. Here is our course, and along this track of pathless ocean it is my intention to steer."

As Columbus spoke, he pointed to a chart that lay spread before him on an arm-chest, passing a finger calmly along the line he intended to pursue. The coast of Europe, in its general outlines, was laid down on this chart with as much accuracy as the geographical knowledge of the day would furnish, and a range of land extended southward as far as Guinea, all beyond which region was *terra incognita* to the learned world at that time.

The Canaries and the Azores, which had been discovered some generations earlier, occupied their proper places, while the western side of the Atlantic was bounded by a fancied delineation of the eastern coast of India, or of Cathay, buttressed by the island of Cipango, or Japan, and an Archipelago, that had been represented principally after the accounts of Marco Polo and his relatives. By a fortunate misconception, Cipango had been placed in a longitude that corresponded very nearly with that of Washington, or some two thousand leagues east of the position in which it is actually to be found. This error of Columbus, in relation to the extent of the circumference of the globe, in the end most probably saved his hardy enterprise from becoming a failure.

Luis, for the first time since he had been engaged in the expedition, cast his eyes over this chart, with some curiosity, and he felt a noble desire to solve the great problem rising within him, as he thus saw, at a glance, all the vast results, as well as the interesting natural phenomena, that were dependent on the issue.

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"By San Gennaro of Napoli!" he exclaimed: the only affectation the young noble had was a habit of invoking the saints of the different countries he had visited, and of using the little oaths and exclamations of distant lands; a summary mode of both letting the world know how far he had journeyed, as well as a portion of the improvement he had derived from his travels,—"By San Gennaro, Señor Don Christoval, but this voyage will be one of exceeding merit, if we ever find our way across this great belt of water; and greater still, should we ever manage to return!"

"The last difficulty is the one, at this moment, uppermost in the minds of most in this vessel," answered Columbus. "Dost thou not perceive, Don Luis, the grave and dejected countenances of the mariners, and hearest thou the wailings that are rising from the shore?"

This remark caused the young man to raise his eyes from the chart, and to take a survey of the scene around him. The Niña, a light felucca in fact, was already under way, and brushing past them under a latine foresail, her

sides thronged with boats filled with people, no small portion of whom were females and children, and most of whom were wringing their hands and raising piteous cries of despair. The Pinta was in the act of being cast; and, although the authority of Martin Alonza Pinzon had the effect to render their grief less clamorous, her sides were surrounded by a similar crowd, while numberless boats plied around the Santa Maria herself; the authority and dignity of the Admiral alone keeping them at a distance. It was evident that most of those who remained fancied that they now saw their departing relations for the last time, while no small portion of those who were on the eve of sailing, believed they were on the point of quitting Spain for ever.

"Hast looked for Pepe, this morning, among our people?" demanded Columbus, the incident of the young sailor recurring to his thoughts, for the first time that morning; "if he prove false to his word, we may regard it as an evil omen, and have an eye on all our followers, while there is a chance of escape."

"If his absence would be an omen of evil, Señor Almirante, his presence ought to be received as an omen of good. The noble fellow is on this yard, above our heads, loosening the sail."

Columbus turned his eyes upwards, and there, indeed, was the young mariner in question, poised on the extreme and attenuated end of the latine yard, that ships even then carried on their after-masts, swinging in the wind, while he loosened the gasket that kept the canvass in its folds. Occasionally he looked beneath him, anxious to discover if his return had been noted; and, once or twice his hands, usually so nimble, lingered in their employment, as he cast glances over the stern of the vessel, as if one also drew his attention in that quarter. Columbus made a sign of recognition to the gratified young mariner, who instantly permitted the canvass to fall; and then he walked to the taffrail, accompanied by Luis, in order to ascertain if any boat was near the ship. There, indeed, close to the vessel, lay a

skiff, rowed by Monica alone, and which had been permitted to approach so near on account of the sex of its occupant. The moment the wife of Pepe observed the form of the Admiral, she arose from her seat, and clasped her hands towards him, desirous, but afraid, to speak. Perceiving that the woman was awed by the bustle, the crowd of persons, and the appearance of the ship, which she was almost near enough to touch with her hand, Columbus addressed her. He spoke mildly, and his looks, usually so grave, and sometimes even stern, were softened to an expression of gentleness that Luis had never before witnessed.

"I see that thy husband hath been true to his promise, good woman," he said, "and I doubt not that thou hast told him it is wiser and better manfully to serve the Queen, than to live under the disgrace of a runaway."

"Señor, I have. I give Doña Isabella my husband without a murmur, if not cheerfully, now I know that you go forth to serve God. I see the wickedness of my repinings, and shall

pray that he may be foremost, on all occasions, until the ears of the Infidel shall be opened to the words of the true faith."

"This is said like a Spanish wife, and a Christian woman! Our lives are in the care of Providence, and doubt not of seeing Pepe, in health and safety, after he hath visited Cathay, and done his share in its discovery."

"Ah! Señor—when?" exclaimed the wife, unable, in spite of her assumed fortitude, and the strong feelings of religious duty, to suppress the impulses of a woman.

"In God's time, my good —— how art thou named?"

"Monica, Señor Almirante, and my husband is called Pepe; and the boy, the poor fatherless child, hath been christened Juan. We have no Moorish blood, but are pure Spaniards, and I pray your Excellency to remember it, on such occasions as may call for more dangerous duty than common."

"Thou mayst depend on my care of the father of Juan," returned the Admiral, smiling, though a tear glistened in his eye. "I, too,

leave behind those that are dear to me as my own soul, and among others a motherless son. Should aught serious befal our vessel, Diego would be an orphan; whereas thy Juan would at least enjoy the care and affection of her who brought him into the world."

"Señor, a thousand pardons!" said the woman, much touched by the feeling that was betrayed by the Admiral in his voice. "We are selfish, and forget that others have sorrows, when we feel our own too keenly. Go forth, in God's name, and do his holy will,—take my husband with you; I only wish that little Juan was old enough to be his companion."

Monica could utter no more, but dashing the tears from her eyes, she resumed the oars, and pulled the little skiff slowly, as if the inanimate machine felt the reluctance of the hands that propelled it towards the land. The short dialogue just related, had been carried on in voices so loud as to be heard by all near the speakers; and when Columbus turned from the boat, he saw that many of his crew had been hanging suspended in the rigging, or

on the yards, eagerly listening to what had been said. At this precise instant the anchor of the Santa Maria was raised from the bottom, and the ship's head began to incline from the direction of the wind. At the next moment, the flap of the large square foresail that crafts of her rig then carried, was heard, and in the course of the next five minutes the three vessels were standing slowly but steadily down the current of the Odiel, in one of the arms of which river they had been anchored, holding their course towards a bar near its mouth. The sun had not yet risen, or rather it rose over the hills of Spain, a fiery ball, just as the sails were set, gilding with a melancholy glory a coast that not a few in the different vessels apprehended they were looking upon for the last time. Many of the boats clung to the two smaller craft until they reached the bar of Saltes, an hour or two later, and some still persevered until they began to toss in the long waves of the breathing ocean when, the wind being fresh at the west, they reluctantly cast off, one by one, amid sighs and groans.

The liberated ships, in the mean while, moved steadily into the blue waters of the shoreless Atlantic, like human beings silently impelled by their destinies towards fates that they can neither foresee, control, nor avoid.

The day was fine, and the wind both brisk and fair. Thus far the omens were propitious; but the unknown future threw a cloud over the feelings of a large portion of those who were thus quitting, in gloomy uncertainty, all that was most dear to them. It was known that the Admiral intended making the best of his way towards the Canaries, thence to enter on the unknown and hitherto untrodden paths of the desert ocean that lay beyond. Those who doubted, therefore, fixed upon those islands as the points where their real dangers were to commence, and already looked forward to their appearance in the horizon with feelings akin to those with which the guilty regard the day of trial, the condemned the morning of execution, or the sinner the bed of death. Many, however, were superior to this weakness, having steeled their nerves and pre-

pared their minds for any hazards, though the feelings of nearly all fluctuated; there being hours when hope and anticipations of success seemed to cheer the entire crews; and then moments would occur, in which the disposition was to common doubts, and a despondency that was nearly general.

A voyage to the Canaries, or the Azores, in that age, was most probably to be classed among the hardiest exploits of seamen. The distance was not as great, certainly, as many of their more ordinary excursions, for vessels frequently went, even in the same direction, as far as the Cape de Verdes; but all the other European passages lay along the land, and in the Mediterranean the seaman felt that he was navigating within known limits, and was apt to consider himself as embayed within the boundaries of human knowledge. On the contrary, while sailing on the broad Atlantic, he was, in some respects, placed in a situation resembling that of the aeronaut, who, while floating in the higher currents of the atmosphere, sees beneath him the earth as his only alighting place, the

blue void of untravelled space stretching in all other directions about him.

The Canary Isles were known to the ancients. Juba, the King of Mauritania, who was a contemporary of Cæsar, is said to have described them with tolerable accuracy, under the general name of the Fortunate Isles. The work itself has been lost, but the fact is known through the evidence of other writers; and by the same means it is known that they possessed, even in that remote age, a population that had made some respectable advances towards civilisation. But in the process of time, and during the dark period that succeeded the brightness of the Roman sway, even the position of these islands was lost to the Europeans; nor was it again ascertained until the first half of the fourteenth century, when they were discovered by certain fugitive Spaniards who were hard pressed by the Moors. After this, the Portuguese, then the most hardy navigators of the known world, got possession of one or two of them, and made them the starting points for their voyages of discovery

along the coast of Guinea. As the Spaniards reduced the power of the Mussulmans, and regained their ancient sway in the peninsula, they once more turned their attention in this direction, conquering the natives of several of the other islands, the group belonging equally to those two Christian nations, at the time of our narrative.

Luis de Bobadilla, who had navigated extensively in the more northern seas, and who had passed and repassed the Mediterranean in various directions, knew nothing of these islands except by report; and as they stood on the poop, Columbus pointed out to him their position, and explained their different characters; relating his intentions in connection with them, dwelling on the supplies they afforded, and on their facilities as a point of departure.

"The Portuguese have profited much by their use of these islands," said Columbus, "as a place for victualling, and wooding, and watering, and I see no reason why Castile may not, now, imitate their example, and receive her share of the benefits. Thou seest how far

south our neighbours have penetrated, and what a trade, and how much riches are flowing into Lisbon, through these noble enterprises, which, notwithstanding, are but as a bucket of water in the ocean, when compared with the wealth of Cathay, and all the mighty consequences that are to follow from this western voyage of ours."

"Dost thou expect to reach the territories of the Great Khan, Don Christoval," demanded Luis, "within a distance as small as that to which the Portuguese hath gone southwardly?"

The navigator looked warily around to ascertain who might hear his words; and finding that no one was within reach of the sound of his voice while he used a proper caution, he lowered its tones, and answered in a manner which greatly flattered his young companion, as it proved that the Admiral was disposed to treat him with the frankness and confidence of a friend.

"Thou knowest, Don Luis," the navigator resumed, "the nature of the spirits with whom

we have to deal. I shall not even be certain of their services, so long as we continue near the coast of Europe; for nought is easier than for one of yonder craft to abandon me in the night, and to seek a haven on some known coast, seeking his justification in some fancied necessity."

"Martin Alonzo is not a man to do that ignoble and unworthy act!" interrupted Luis.

"He is not, my young friend, for a motive as base as fear," returned Columbus, with a sort of thoughtful smile, which showed how truly and early he had dived into the real characters of those with whom he was associated. "Martin Alonzo is a bold and intelligent navigator, and we may look for good service at his hands, in all that toucheth resolution and perseverance. But the eyes of the Pinzons cannot be always open, and the knowledge of all the philosophers of the earth could make no resistance against the headlong impetuosity of a crew of alarmed mutineers. I do not feel certain of our own people while there is a hope of easy return; much less of men who are not

directly under my own eye and command. The question thou hast asked, Luis, may not, therefore, be publicly answered; since the distance that we are about to sail over would frighten our easily alarmed mariners. Thou art a cavalier, a knight of known courage, and may be depended on; and I may tell thee, without fear of arousing any unworthy feelings, that the voyage on which we are now fairly embarked, hath never had a precedent on this earth, for its length, or for the loneliness of its way."

"And yet, Señor, thou enterest on it with the confidence of a man certain of reaching his haven?"

"Luis, thou hast well judged my feelings. As to all those common dreads of descents and ascents, of the difficulties of a return, and of reaching the margin of the world, whence we may glide off into space, neither thou nor I shall be much subjected."

"By San Iago! Señor Don Christoval, I have no very settled notions about these things. I have never known of any one who hath slid-

den off the earth into the air, it is true, nor do I much think that such a slide is likely to befal us and our good ships; but, on the other hand, we have as yet only doctrine to prove that the earth is round, and that it is possible to journey east by sailing west. On these subjects, then, I hold myself neuter; while, at the same time, thou mayst steer direct for the moon, and Luis de Bobadilla will be found at thy side."

"Thou makest thyself less expert in science, mad-brained young noble, than is either true or necessary; but we will say no more of this at present. There will be sufficient leisure to make thee familiar with all my intricate reasons and familiar motives. And is not this, Don Luis, a most heavenly sight? Here am I in the open ocean, honoured by the two sovereigns with the dignity of their viceroy and admiral; with a fleet that is commissioned by their Highnesses to carry the knowledge of their power and authority to the uttermost parts of the earth; and, most of all, to raise the cross of our blessed Redeemer before the

eyes of infidels, who have never yet even heard his name; or, if they have, reverence it as little as a Christian would reverence the idols of the heathens!"

This was said with the calm but deep enthusiasm that coloured the entire character of the great navigator, rendering him, at times, equally the subject of distrust and of profound respect. On Luis, as indeed on most others who lived in sufficient familiarity with the man to enable them to appreciate his motives, and to judge correctly of the uprightness of his views, the effect, however, was always favourable, and probably would have been so, had Mercedes never existed. The young man himself, was not entirely without a tinge of enthusiasm; and, as is ever the case with the single-minded and generous, he best knew how to regard the impulses of those who were influenced by similar qualities. This answer was consequently in accordance with the feelings of the Admiral, and they remained on the poop several hours, discoursing of the future, with the ardour of those who hoped for every-

thing, but in a manner too discursive and general to render a record of the dialogue easy or necessary.

It was eight o'clock in the morning when the vessels passed the bar of Saltes, and the day had far advanced before the navigators had lost sight of the familiar eminences that lay around Palos, and the other well-known landmarks of the coast. The course was due south, and, as the vessels of that day were lightly sparred, and spread comparatively very little canvass, when considered in connection with the more dashing navigation of our own times, the rate of sailing was slow, and far from promising a speedy termination to a voyage that all knew must be long without a precedent, and which so many feared could never have an end. Two marine leagues, of three English miles, an hour, was good progress for a vessel of that day, even with a fresh and favourable wind; though there are a few memorable days' works set down by Columbus himself, which approach to a hundred and sixty miles in the twenty-four hours, and which are evidently

noted as a speed of which a mariner might well be proud. In these days of locomotion and travelling, it is scarcely necessary to tell the intelligent reader this is but a little more than half the distance that is sailed over by a fast ship, under similar circumstances, and in our own time.

Thus the sun set upon the adventurers, in this celebrated voyage, when they had sailed with a strong breeze, to use the words of Columbus's own record, some eleven hours, after quitting the bar. By this time, they had made good less than fifty miles, in a due south course from the place of their departure. The land in the neighbourhood of Palos had entirely sunk behind the watery margin of the ocean, in that direction, and the coast trending eastward, it was only here and there that the misty summits of a few of the mountains of Seville could just be discovered by the experienced eyes of the older mariners, as the glowing ball of the sun sunk into the watery bed of the western horizon, and disappeared from view. At this precise moment, Columbus and Luis

were again on the poop, watching, with melancholy interest, the last shadows cast by Spanish land, while two seamen were at work near them, splicing a rope that had been chafed asunder. The latter were seated on the deck, and as, out of respect to the Admiral, they had taken their places a little on one side, their presence was not at first noted.

"There setteth the sun beneath the waves of the wide Atlantic, Señor Gutierrez," observed the Admiral, who was ever cautious to use one or the other of Luis's feigned appellations, whenever any person was near. "There the sun quitteth us, Pero, and in his daily course I see a proof of the globular form of the earth; and of the truth of a theory which teacheth us that Cathay may be reached by the western voyage."

"I am ever ready to admit the wisdom of all your plans, expectations, and thoughts, Señor Don Christoval," returned the young man, punctiliously observant of respect, both in speech and manner; "but I confess I cannot see what the daily course of the sun has to

do with the position of Cathay, or with the road that leads to it. We know that the great luminary travelleth the heavens without ceasing, that it cometh up out of the sea in the morning, and goeth down to its watery bed at night; but this it doth on the coast of Castile as well as on that of Cathay; and, therefore, to me it doth appear, that no particular inference, for or against our success, is to be drawn from the circumstance."

As this was said the two sailors ceased working, looking curiously up into the face of the Admiral, anxious to hear his reply. By this movement Luis perceived that one was Pepe, to whom he gave a nod of recognition, while the other was a stranger. The last had every appearance of a thoroughbred seaman of that period, or of being, what would have been termed in English, and the more northern languages of Europe, a regular "sea-dog;" a term that expresses the idea of a man so completely identified with the ocean by habit, as to have had his exterior, his thoughts, his language,

and even his morality, coloured by the association. This sailor was approaching fifty, was short, square, athletic, and still active; but there was a mixture of the animal with the intellectual creature about his coarse, heavy features, that is very usual in the countenances of men of native humour and strong sense, whose habits have been coarse and sensual. That he was a prime seaman Columbus knew at a glance, not only from his general appearance, but from his occupation, which was such as only fell to the lot of the most skilful men of every crew.

"I reason after this fashion, Señor," answered the Admiral, as soon as his eye turned from the glance that he, too, had thrown upon the men; "the sun is not made to journey thus around the earth without a sufficient motive, the providence of God being ruled by infinite wisdom. It is not probable that a luminary so generous and useful should be intended to waste any of its benefits; and we are certain already that day and night journey westward over this earth as far as it is known

to us; whence I infer that the system is harmonious, and the benefits of the great orb are unceasingly bestowed on man, reaching one spot on the earth as it quits another. The sun that hath just left us is still visible in the Azores, and will be seen again at Smyrna, and among the Grecian Islands, an hour or more before it again meets our eyes. Nature hath designed nought for uselessness; and I believe that Cathay will be enlightened by that ball which hath just left us, while we shall be in the deepest hour of the night, to return by its eastern path across the great continent of Asia, and to greet us again in the morning. In a word, friend Pedro, that which Sol is now doing with such nimble speed in the heavens, we are more humbly imitating in our own caravels: give us sufficient time, and we, too, might traverse the earth, coming in from our journey by the land of the Tartars and the Persians."

"From all which you infer that the world is round, wherein we are to find the certainty of our success?"

"This is so true, Señor de Munos, that I should be sorry to think any man who now saileth under my command did not admit it. Here are two seamen who have been listening to our discourse, and we will question them, that we may know the opinions of men accustomed to the ocean.—Thou art the husband with whom I held discourse on the sands, the past evening, and thy name is Pepe?"

"Señor Almirante, your Excellency's memory doth me too much honour, in not forgetting a face that is altogether unworthy of being noticed and remembered."

"It is an honest face, friend, and no doubt speaketh for a true heart. I shall count on thee as a sure support, let things go as they may."

"His Excellency hath not only a right to command me, as her Highness's admiral, but he hath now the good-will of Monica, and that is much the same as having gained her husband."

"I thank thee, honest Pepe, and shall count on thee, with certainty, in future," answered

Columbus, turning towards the other seaman—"And thou, shipmate,—thou hast the air of one that the sight of troubled water will not alarm,—thou hast a name?"

"That I have, noble Admiral," returned the fellow, looking up with a freedom that denoted one used to have his say; "though it hath neither a Don nor a Señor to take it in tow. My intimates commonly call out Sancho, when pressed for time; and when civility gets the better of haste, they add Mundo, making Sancho Mundo for the whole name of a very poor man."

"Mundo is a large name for so small a person," said the Admiral, smiling, for he foresaw the expediency of having friends among his crew, and knew men sufficiently to understand that, while undue familiarity undermined respect, a little unbending had a tendency to win hearts. "I wonder that thou shouldst venture to wear a sound so lofty!"

"I tell my fellows, your Excellency, that Mundo is my title, and not my name; and that I am greater than kings, even, who are

content to take their titles from a part of that of which I bear all."

"And were thy father and thy mother called Mundo also; or, is this name taken in order to give thee an occasion to show thy smartness, when questioned by thy officers?"

"As for the good people you deign to mention, Señor Don Almirante, I shall leave them to answer for themselves, and that for the simple reason that I do not know how they were called, or whether they had any names at all. They tell me I was found, when a few hours old, under a worn-out basket, at the ship-yard gate of old ——"

"Never mind the precise spot, friend Sancho; thou wert found with a basket for a cradle, and that maketh a volume in thy history, at once."

"Nay, Excellency, I would not leave the spot a place of dispute hereafter — but it shall be as you please. They say no one here knoweth exactly where we are going, and it will be more suitable that the like ignorance should rest over the places whence we came. But

having the world before me, they that christened me gave me as much of it as was to be got by a name."

"Thou hast been long a mariner, Sancho Mundo,—if Mundo thou wilt be."

"So long, Señor, that it sickeneth me, and taketh away the appetite to walk on solid ground. Being so near the gate, it was no great matter to put me into the ship-yard, and I was launched one day in a caravel, and got to sea in her, no one knows how. From that time I have submitted to fate, and go out again as soon as possible after I come into port."

"And by what lucky chance have I obtained thy services, good Sancho, in this great expedition?"

"The authorities of Moguer took me under the Queen's order, your Excellency, thinking that this voyage would be more to my mind than another, as it was likely never to have an end."

"Art thou a compelled adventurer on this service?"

"Not I, Señor Don Almirante, although they who sent me here fancy as much. It is natural for a man to wish to see his estates once in his life; and I am told that we are bound on a voyage to the other side of the world. God forbid that I should hold aloof on such an occasion."

"Thou art a Christian, Sancho, and hast a desire to aid in carrying the cross among the heathen?"

"Señor, your Excellency, Don Almirante, it matters little to Sancho with what the barque is laden, so that she do not need much pumping, and that the garlic is good. If I am not a very devout Christian, it is the fault of those who found me near the ship-yard gate, since the church and the font are both within call from that very spot. I know that Pepe, here, is a Christian, Señor, for I saw him in the arms of the priest; and I doubt not that there are old men at Moguer who can testify to as much in my behalf. At all hazards, noble Admiral, I will take on myself to say that I am neither Jew nor Mussulman."

"Sancho, thou hast that about thee that bespeaketh a skilful and bold mariner."

"For both of these qualities, Señor Don Colon, let others speak. When the gale cometh, your own eyes may judge of the first; and when the caravel shall reach the edge of the earth, whither some think it is bound, there will be a good occasion to see who can and who cannot look off, without trembling."

"It is enough: I count both thee and Pepe as among my truest followers." As Columbus said this he walked away, resuming the dignified gravity that usually was seated in his countenance, and which so much aided his authority by impressing the minds of others with respect. In a few minutes he and Luis descended to their cabin.

"I marvel, Sancho," said Pepe, as soon as he and his messmate were left alone on the poop, "that thou wilt venture to use thy tongue so freely, even in the presence of one that beareth about with him the Queen's

authority! Dost thou not fear to offend the Admiral?"

"So much for having a wife and a child! Canst thou not make any difference between them that have had ancestors and who have descendants, and one that hath no other tie in the world than his name? The Señor Don Almirante is either an exceeding great man, and chosen by Providence to open the way into the unknown seas of which he speaketh, or he is but a hungry Genoese that is leading us he knoweth not whither, that he may eat, and drink, and sleep in honour, while we are toiling at his heels, like patient mules dragging the load that the horse despiseth. In the one case he is too great and exalted to heed idle words; and in the other, what is there too bad for a Castilian to tell him?"

"Ay, thou art fond of calling thyself a Castilian, in spite of the ship-yard and the basket, and notwithstanding Moguer is in Seville."

"Harkee, Pepe; is not the Queen of Castile our mistress? And are not subjects — true

and lawful subjects, I mean, like thee and me — are not such subjects worthy of being their Queen's countrymen? Never disparage thyself, good Pepe, for thou wilt ever find the world ready enough to do that favour for thee. As to this Genoese, he shall be either friend or enemy to Sancho: if the first, I expect much consolation from it; if the last, let him hunt for his Cathay till doomsday, he shall be never the wiser."

"Well, Sancho, if words can mar a voyage or make a voyage, thou art a ready mariner; none know how to discourse better than thou."

Here the men both rose, having completed their work, and they left the poop, descending among the rest of the crew. Columbus had not miscalculated his aim, his words and condescension having produced a most favourable effect on the mind of Sancho Mundo, for so the man was actually called; and in gaining one of so ready a wit and loose a tongue for a friend, he obtained an ally who was not to be despised. Of such materials, and with the

support of such instruments as this, is success too often composed, it being possible for the discovery of a world, even, to depend on the good word of one less qualified to influence opinions than Sancho Mundo.

CHAPTER V.

While you here do snoring lie,
Open-eyed conspiracy
His time doth take:
If of life you keep a care,
Shake off slumber, and beware:
Awake! Awake!

Ariel.

The wind continuing fair, the three vessels made good progress in the direction of the Canaries; Sunday, in particular, proving a propitious day, the expedition making more than one hundred and twenty miles in the course of the twenty-four hours. The wind still continued favourable, and on the morning of Monday the 6th of August, Columbus was cheerfully conversing with Luis, and one or two other companions who were standing near him on the poop, when the Pinta was seen suddenly to take in her forward sails, and to

come up briskly, not to say awkwardly, to the wind. This manœuvre denoted some accident, and the Santa Maria, fortunately having the advantage of the wind, immediately edged away to speak her consort.

"How now, Señor Martin Alonzo," hailed the Admiral, as the two caravels came near enough together to speak each other. "For what reason hast thou so suddenly paused in thy course?"

"Fortune would have it so, Señor Don Christoval, seeing that the rudder of the good caravel hath broken loose, and we must fain secure it ere we may again trust ourselves to the breeze."

A severe frown came over the grave countenance of the great navigator; and, after bidding Martin Alonzo to do his best to repair the damage, he paced the deck, greatly disturbed, for several minutes. Observing how much the Admiral took this accident to heart, the rest descended to the deck below, leaving Columbus alone with the pretended groom of the King's chamber.

"I trust, Señor, this is no serious injury, or one in any way likely to retard our advance," said Luis, after manifesting that respect which all near him felt for the Admiral, by a pause. "I know honest Martin Alonzo to be a ready seaman, and should think his expedients might easily serve to get us as far as the Canaries, where greater damages can meet with their remedies."

"Thou say'st true, Luis, and we will hope for the best. I feel regret the sea is so high that we can offer no assistance to the Pinta, but Martin Alonzo is, indeed, an expert mariner, and on his ingenuity we must rely. My concern, however, hath another and a deeper source than the unloosing of this rudder, serious as such an injury ever is to a vessel at sea. Thou know'st that the Pinta hath been furnished to the service of the Queen, under the order claiming the forfeited duty from the delinquents of Palos, and sorely against the will of the caravel's owners hath the vessel been taken. Now these persons, Gomez Rascon and Christoval Quintero, are on

board her, and I question not have designed this accident. Their artifices were practised long to our delay before quitting the haven, and it would seem are to be continued to our prejudice here on the open ocean."

"By the allegiance I owe the Doña Isabella! Señor Don Christoval, but I would find a speedy cure for such a treason, if the office of punishment rested with me. Let me jump into the skiff and repair to the Pinta, where I will tell these Masters Rascon and Quintero, that should their rudder ever dare to break loose again, or should any other similar and untoward accident chance to arrive, the first shall be hanged at the yard of his own caravel, and the last be cast into the sea to examine into the state of her bottom, the rudder included."

"We may not practise such high authority without great occasion, and perfect certainty of guilt. I hold it to be wiser to seek another caravel at the Canaries; for, by this accident, I well see we shall not be rid of the artifices of the two owners until we are rid of their

vessel. It will be hazardous to launch the skiff in this sea, or I would proceed to the Pinta myself; but, as it is, let us have confidence in Martin Alonzo and his skill."

Columbus thus encouraged the people of the Pinta to exert themselves, and in about an hour or two the three vessels were again making the best of their way towards the Canaries. Notwithstanding the delay, nearly ninety miles were made good in the course of the day and night; but, the following morning, the rudder again broke loose, and, as the damage was more serious than in the former instance, it was still more difficult to repair. These repeated accidents gave the Admiral great concern, for he took them to be so many indications of the disaffection of his followers. He fully determined, in consequence, to get rid of the Pinta, if it were possible to find another suitable vessel among the islands. As the progress of the vessels was much retarded by the accident, although the wind continued favourable, the expedition only got

some sixty miles, this day, nearer to its place of destination.

On the following morning the three vessels came within hail of each other; and a comparison of the nautical skill of the different navigators or pilots, as it was then the custom to style them, took place, each offering his opinion as to the position of the vessels.

It was not the least of the merits of Columbus that he succeeded in his great experiment with the imperfect aid of the instruments then in use. The mariner's compass, it is true, had been in common service quite a century, if not longer; though its variations, a knowledge of which is scarcely less important in long voyages than a knowledge of the instrument itself, were then unknown to seamen, who seldom ventured far enough from the land to note these mysteries of nature, and who, as a class, still relied almost as much on the ordinary position of the heavenly bodies to ascertain their routes, as on the nicer results of calculation. Columbus, however, was a striking exception to this little-instructed class, having

made himself thoroughly acquainted with all the learning of the period that could be applied in his profession, or which might aid him in effecting the great purpose for which alone he now seemed to live.

As might be expected, the comparison resulted altogether in the Admiral's favour, the pilots in general being soon convinced that he alone knew the true position of the vessels,—a fact that was soon unanswerably determined by the appearance of the summits of the Canaries, which hove up out of the ocean in a south-easterly direction, resembling well-defined dark clouds clustering in the horizon. As objects like these are seen at a great distance at sea, more especially in a transparent atmosphere, and the wind became light and variable, the vessels, notwithstanding, were unable to reach Grand Canary until Thursday the 8th of August, or nearly a week after they had left Palos. There they all ran in, and anchored in the usual haven. Columbus immediately set about making an inquiry for another caravel; but proving unsuccessful, he sailed for

Gomera, where he believed it might be easier to obtain the craft he wanted. While the Admiral was thus employed with the Santa Maria and the Niña, Martin Alonzo remained in port, being unable to keep company in the crippled condition of the Pinta. But no suitable vessel being found, Columbus reluctantly returned to Grand Canary; and, after repairing the Pinta, which vessel was badly caulked, among the other devices that had been adopted to get her freed from the service, he sailed again for Gomera, from which island he was to take his final departure.

During these several changes a brooding discontent began to increase among most of the common mariners, while some even of a higher class were not altogether free from the most melancholy apprehensions for the future. While passing from Grand Canary to Gomera, with all his vessels, Columbus was again at his post, with Luis and his usual companions near him, when the Admiral's attention was drawn to a conversation that took place between a group of the men who had collected

near the main-mast. It was night, and, there being little wind, the voices of the excited disputants reached farther than they themselves were aware.

"I tell thee, Pepe," said the most vociferous and most earnest of the speakers, "that the night is not darker than the future of this crew. Look to the west, and what dost see there? Who hath ever heard of land after he hath quitted the Azores? and who is so ignorant as not to know that Providence hath placed water around all the continents, with a few islands as stopping-places for mariners, and spread the broad ocean beyond, with an intention to rebuke an over-eager curiosity to pry into matters that savour more of miracles than of common worldly things?"

"This is well, Pero," answered Pepe; "but I know that Monica thinks the Admiral is sent of God, and that we may look forward to great discoveries through his means; and most especially to the spreading of religion among the heathen."

"Ay, thy Monica should have been in Doña

Isabella's seat, so learned and positive is she in all matters, whether touching her own woman's duties, or thine own. She is *thy* quean, Pepe, as all in Moguer will swear; and there are some who say she would gladly govern the port as she governeth thee."

"Say nought against the mother of my child, Pero," interrupted Pepe angrily. "I can bear thy idle words against myself, but he that speaketh ill of Monica will have a dangerous enemy."

"Thou art bold of speech, Pero, when away a hundred leagues from thine own better nine-tenths," put in a voice that Columbus and Luis both knew on the instant to belong to Sancho Mundo, "and art bold enough to jeer Pepe touching Monica, when we all well know who commandeth in a certain cabin, where thou art as meek as a hooked dolphin, whatever thou may'st be here. But, enough of thy folly about women; let us reason upon our knowledge as mariners, if thou wilt, instead of asking questions of one like Pepe, who is

too young to have had much experience. I offer myself as thy catechist."

"What hast *thou*, then, to say about this unknown land that lieth beyond the great ocean, where man hath never been, or is at all likely to go with followers such as these?"

"I have this to say, silly and idle-tongued Pero, that the time was when even the Canaries were unknown; when mariners did not dare to pass the straits; and when the Portuguese knew nothing of their mines and Guinea,—lands that I myself have visited, and where the noble Don Christoval hath also been, as I know on the testimony of mine own eyes."

"And what hath Guinea, or what have the mines of the Portuguese to do with this western voyage? All know that there is a country called Africa; and what is there surprising that mariners should reach a land that is known to exist: but who knoweth that the ocean hath other continents, any more than that the heavens have other earths?"

"This is well, Pero," observed an attentive

by-stander; "and Sancho will have to drain his wits to answer it."

"It is well for those who wag their tongues like women, without thought of what they say," coolly returned Sancho, "but will have little weight with Doña Isabella or Don Almirante. Harkee, Pero, thou art like one that hath trodden the path between Palos and Moguer so often that thou fanciest there is no road to Seville or Granada. There must be a beginning to all things; and this voyage is, out of doubt, the beginning of voyages to Cathay. We go west instead of east, because it is the shorter way; and because, moreover, it is the *only* way for a caravel. Now, answer me, messmates, is it possible for a craft, let her size or rig be what it may, to pass over the hills and valleys of a continent — I mean under her canvass, and by fair sailing?"

Sancho waited for a reply, and received a common and complete admission of the impossibility of the thing.

"Then cast your eyes at the Admiral's chart, in the morning, as he keepeth it spread

before him on the poop, yonder, and you will see that there is land from one pole to the other, on each side of the Atlantic, thereby rendering navigation impossible, in any other direction than this we are now taking. The notion of Pero, therefore, runs in the teeth of Nature."

"This is so true, Pero," exclaimed another, the rest assenting, "that thy mouth ought to be shut."

But Pero had a mouth that was not very easily closed; and it is probable that his answer would have been to the full as acute and irrefutable as that of Sancho, had not a common exclamation of alarm and horror burst from all around him. The night was sufficiently clear to permit the gloomy outlines of the Peak of Teneriffe to be distinctly visible, even at some distance; and, just at that moment, flashes of flame shot upwards from its pointed summit, illuminating, at instants, the huge pile, and then leaving it in shadowy darkness, an object of mystery and terror. Many of the seamen dropped on their knees

and began to tell their beads, while all, as it might be instinctively, crossed themselves. Next arose a general murmur; and in a few minutes, the men who slept were awoke, and appeared among their fellows, awe-struck and astounded spectators of the phenomenon. It was soon settled that the attention of the Admiral should be drawn to this strange event, and Pero was selected for the spokesman.

All this time, Columbus and his companions remained on the poop, and, as might have been expected, this unlooked-for change in the appearance of the Peak had not escaped their attention. Too enlightened to be alarmed by it, they were watching the workings of the mountain, when Pero, accompanied by nearly every sailor in the vessel, appeared on the quarter-deck. Silence having been obtained, Pero opened the subject of his mission with a zeal that was not a little stimulated by his fears.

"Señor Almirante," he commenced, "we have come to pray your Excellency to look at the summit of the Island of Teneriffe, where

we all think we see a solemn warning against persevering in sailing into the unknown Atlantic. It is truly time for men to remember their weakness, and how much they owe to the goodness of God, when even the mountains vomit flames and smoke!"

"Have any here ever navigated the Mediterranean, or visited the island of which Don Ferdinand, the honoured consort of our lady the Queen, is master?" demanded Columbus, calmly.

"Señor Don Almirante," hastily answered Sancho, "I have done so, unworthy as I may seem to have enjoyed that advantage. And I have seen Cyprus and Alexandria, and even Stamboul, the residence of the Great Turk."

"Well, then, thou may'st have also seen Ætna, another mountain which continueth to throw up those flames, in the midst of a nature and a scene on which Providence would seem to have smiled with unusual benignity, instead of angrily frowning, as ye seem to imagine."

Columbus then proceeded to give his people

an explanation of the causes of volcanoes, referring to the gentlemen around him to corroborate the fidelity of his statements. He told them that he looked upon this little eruption as merely a natural occurrence; or, if he saw any omen at all in the event, it was propitious rather than otherwise: Providence seeming disposed to light them on their way. Luis and the rest next descended among the crew, where they used their reasoning powers in quieting an alarm that, at first, had threatened to be serious. For the moment they were successful, or perhaps it would be better to say that they succeeded completely, so far as the phenomenon of the volcano was concerned, and this less by the arguments of the more intelligent of the officers, than by means of the testimony of Sancho, and one or two others of the common men, who had seen similar scenes elsewhere. With difficulties like these had the great navigator to contend, even after he had passed years in solicitations to obtain the limited means which had been finally granted, in order to effect one of the sublimest achieve-

ments that had yet crowned the enterprise of man!

The vessels reached Gomera on the 2nd of September, where they remained several days, in order to complete their repairs and to finish taking in their supplies, ere they finally left the civilised abodes of man, and what might then be deemed the limits of the known earth. The arrival of such an expedition, in an age when the means of communication were so few that events were generally their own announcers, had produced a strong sensation among the inhabitants of the different islands visited by the adventurers. Columbus was held in high honour among them, not only on account of the commission he had received from the two sovereigns, but on account of the magnitude and the romantic character of his undertaking.

There existed a common belief among all the adjacent islands, including Madeira, the Azores, and the Canaries, that land lay to the westward; their inhabitants living under a singular delusion in this particular, which the Admi-

ral had an occasion to detect, during his second visit to Gomera. Among the most distinguished persons who were then on the island was Doña Inez Peraza, the mother of the Count of Gomera. She was attended by a crowd of persons, not only belonging to her own, but who had come from other islands to do her honour. She entertained the Admiral in a manner suited to his high rank, admitting to her society such of the adventurers as Columbus saw fit to point out as worthy of the honour. Of course the pretended Pedro de Muños, or Pero Gutierrez, as he was now indifferently termed, was of the number; as, indeed, were most of those who might be deemed any way suited to so high and polished a society.

"I rejoice, Don Christopher," said Doña Inez Peraza, on this occasion, "that their Highnesses have at length yielded to your desire to solve this great problem, not only on account of our Holy Church, which, as you say, hath so deep an interest in your success, and the honour of the two Sovereigns, and the

welfare of Spain, and all the other great considerations that we have so freely touched upon in our discourse already, but on account of the worthy inhabitants of the Fortunate Islands, who have not only many traditions touching land in the west, but most of whom believe that they have more than once seen it, in that quarter, in the course of their lives."

"I have heard of this, noble lady, and would be grateful to have the account from the mouths of eye-witnesses, now we are here together, conversing freely concerning that which is of so much interest to us all."

"Then, Señor, I will entreat this worthy cavalier, who is every way capable of doing the subject justice, to be spokesman for us, and to let you know what we all believe in these islands, and what so many of us fancy we have seen. Acquaint the Admiral, Señor Dama, I pray thee, of the singular yearly view that we get of unknown land, lying afar off, in the Atlantic."

"Most readily, Doña Inez, and all the more so at your gracious bidding," returned the per-

son addressed, who disposed himself to tell the story, with a readiness that the lovers of the wonderful are apt to betray when a fitting opportunity offers to indulge a favourite propensity.—"The illustrious Admiral hath probably heard of the island of St. Brandan, that lieth some eighty or a hundred leagues to the westward of Ferro, and which hath been so often seen, but which no navigator hath yet been able to reach, in our days at least."

"I have often heard of this fabled spot, Señor," the Admiral gravely replied; "but pardon me if I say that the land never yet existed which a mariner hath seen and yet a mariner hath not reached."

"Nay, noble Admiral," interrupted a dozen eager voices, among which that of the lady, herself, was very distinctly audible,—"that it hath been seen, most here know; and that it hath never been reached, is a fact to which more than one disappointed pilot can testify."

"That which we have seen, we know; and that which we know, we can describe," returned Columbus, steadily.—"Let any man tell

me in what meridian, or on what parallel this St. Brandan, or St. Barandon, lieth, and a week shall make *me* also certain of its existence."

"I know little of meridians or parallels, Don Christopher," said the Señor Dama; "but I have some ideas of visible things. This island have I often seen, more or less plainly at different times; and that, too, under the serenest skies, and at occasions when it was not possible greatly to mistake either its form or its dimensions. Once I remember to have seen the sun set behind one of its heights."

"This is plain evidence, and such as a navigator should respect; and yet do I take what you imagine yourself to have seen, Señor, to be some illusion of the atmosphere."

"Impossible!—impossible!" was said, or echoed, by a dozen voices.—"Hundreds yearly witness the appearance of St. Brandan, and its equally sudden and mysterious disappearance."

"Therein, noble lady and generous cavalier, lieth the error into which ye have fallen. Ye see the Peak the year round; and he who will

cruise a hundred miles, north or south, east or west of it, will continue to see it the year round, except on such days as the state of the atmosphere may forbid. The land which God hath created stationary will be certain to remain stationary, until disturbed by some great convulsion that cometh equally of his providence and his laws."

"All this may be true, Señor; doubtless it *is* true; but every rule hath its exceptions. You will not deny that God ruleth the world mysteriously, and that his ends are not always visible to human eyes. Else, why hath the Moor so long been permitted to rule in Spain? why hath the Infidel, at this moment, possession of the Holy Sepulchre? why have the sovereigns been so long deaf to your own well-grounded wishes and entreaties to be permitted to carry their banners, in company with the cross, to the Cathay, whither you are now bound? Who knoweth that these appearances of St. Brandan may not be given as signs to encourage one like yourself, bent on still greater ends than even reaching its shores?"

Columbus was an enthusiast; but his was an enthusiasm that was seated in his reverence for the acknowledged mysteries of religion, which sought no other support from things incomprehensible, than might reasonably be thought to belong to the exercise of infallible wisdom, and which manifested a proper reverence for a Divine Power. Like most of that period, he believed in modern miracles; and his dependence on the direct worldly efficacy of votive offerings, penances, and prayers, was such as marked the age in general, and his calling in particular. Still, his masculine understanding rejected the belief of vulgar prodigies; and while he implicitly thought himself set apart and selected for the great work before him, he was not disposed to credit that an airy exhibition of an island was placed in the west to tempt mariners to follow its shadowy outline to the more distant regions of Cathay.

"That I feel the assurance of the Providence of God having selected me as the humble instrument of connecting Europe with Asia, by

means of a direct voyage by sea, is certain," returned the navigator, gravely, though his eye lighted with its latent enthusiasm; "but I am far from indulging in the weakness of thinking, that direct, miraculous, agencies are to be used to guide me on my way. It is more in conformity to the practice of Divine wisdom, and certainly more grateful to my own self-love, that the means employed are such as a discreet pilot, and the most experienced philosophers, might feel proud in finding themselves selected to display. My thoughts have first been turned to the contemplation of this subject; then hath my reason been enlightened by a due course of study and reflection; and science hath aided in producing the conviction necessary to impel myself to proceed, and to enable me to induce others to join in this enterprise."

"And do all your followers, noble Admiral, act under the same guidance?" demanded the Doña Inez, glancing at Luis, whose manly graces and martial aspect had found favour in

the eyes of most of the ladies of the island.—"Is the Señor Gutierrez equally enlightened in this manner? and hath he, too, devoted his nights to study, in order that the cross may be carried to the heathen, and Castile and Cathay may be more closely united?"

"The Señor Gutierrez is a willing adventurer, Señora; but he must be the expounder of his own motives."

"Then will we call on the cavalier, himself, for an answer. These ladies feel a desire to know what may have impelled one who would be certain to succeed at the court of Doña Isabella, and in the Moorish wars, to join in such an expedition."

"The Moorish wars are ended, Señora," replied Luis, smiling; "and Doña Isabella, and all the ladies of her court, most favour the youths who show a manly disposition to serve the interests and to advance the honour of Castile. I know very little of philosophy, and have still smaller pretensions to the learning of churchmen; but I think I see Cathay before

me, shining like a brilliant star in the heavens, and am willing to adventure body and soul in its search."

Many pretty exclamations of admiration broke from the circle of fair listeners; it being most easy for spirit to gain applause, when it is recommended by high personal advantages and comes from the young and favoured. That Columbus, a weather-worn veteran of the ocean, should see fit to risk a life that was already drawing near its close, in a rash attempt to pry into the mysteries of the Atlantic, seemed neither so commendable nor so daring; but many discovered high qualities in the character of one who was just entering on his career, and that under auspices apparently so flattering, and who threw all his hopes on the uncertain chances of success in a scheme so unusual. Luis was human, and he was in the full enjoyment of the admiration his enterprise had evidently awakened among so many sensitive young creatures, when Doña Inez most inopportunely interposed to interrupt his happiness and to wound his self-esteem.

"This is having more honourable views than my letters from Seville attribute to one youth, who belongeth to the proudest of our Castilian houses, and whose titles alone should invite him to add new lustre to a name that hath so long been the Spanish boast," resumed the Señora Peraza. "The reports speak of his desire to rove, but in a manner unworthy of his rank; and that, too, in a way to serve neither the sovereigns, his country, nor himself."

"And who may this misguided youth be, Señora?" eagerly inquired Luis, too much elated by the admiration he had just excited to anticipate the answer.—"A cavalier thus spoken of needeth to be warned of his reputation, that he may be stimulated to attempt better things."

"His name is no secret, since the Court speaketh openly of his singular and ill-judged career; and it is said that even his love hath been thwarted in consequence. I mean a cavalier of no less lineage and name than Don Luis de Bobadilla, the Count of Llera."

It is said that listeners seldom hear good of themselves, and Luis was now fated to verify the truth of the axiom. He felt the blood rushing to his face, and it required a strong effort at self-command to prevent him from breaking out in exclamations, that would probably have contained invocations of half the patron saints he had ever heard of, had he not happily succeeded in controlling the sudden impulse. Gulping the words he had been on the point of uttering, he looked round, with an air of defiance, as if seeking the countenance of some man who might dare even to smile at what had been said. Luckily, at that moment, Columbus had drawn all of the males present around himself, in warm discussion of the probable existence of the island of St. Brandan; and Luis nowhere met a smile, with which he could conveniently quarrel, that had a setting of beard to render it hostile. Fortunately, the gentle impulses that are apt to influence a youthful female, induced one of Doña Inez's fair companions to speak, and that in a way greatly to relieve the feelings of our hero.

"True, Señora," rejoined the pretty young advocate, the first tones of whose voice had an effect to calm the tempest that was rising in the bosom of the young man; "true, Señora, it is said that Don Luis is a wanderer, and one of unsettled tastes and habits, but it is also said he hath a most excellent heart, is generous as the dews of heaven themselves, and carrieth the very best lance of Castile, as he is also like to carry off the fairest maiden."

"It is vain, Señor de Munoz, for churchmen to preach and parents to frown," said Doña Inez, smiling, "while the beautiful and young will prize courage, and deeds in arms, and an open hand, before the more homely virtues commended by our holy religion, and so zealously inculcated by its servants. The unhorsing of a knight or two in the tourneys, and the rallying a broken squadron under a charge of the Infidel, counteth far more than years of sobriety and weeks of penance and prayer."

"How know we that the cavalier you mention, Señora, may not have his weeks of

penance and his hours of prayer?" answered Luis, who had now found his voice.—"Should he be so fortunate as to enjoy a conscientious religious adviser, he can scarce escape both, —prayer being so often ordered in the way of penance. He seemeth, indeed, to be a miserable dog, and I wonder not that his mistress holdeth him cheap. Is the name of the lady, also, given in your letter?"

"It is. She is the Doña Maria de las Mercedes de Valverde, nearly allied to the Guzmans and the other great houses, and one of the fairest maidens of Spain."

"That is she!" exclaimed Luis, "and one of the most virtuous as well as fair, and wise as virtuous!"

"How now, Señor? Is it possible that you can have sufficient knowledge of one so situated, as to speak thus positively of her qualities as well as of her appearance?"

"Her beauty I have seen, and of her excellencies one may speak by report. But doth your correspondent, Señora, say aught of what hath become of the graceless lover?"

"It is rumoured that he hath again quitted Spain, and, as is supposed, under the grave displeasure of the sovereigns; since it hath been remarked that the Queen now never nameth him. None know the road he hath taken, but there is little doubt that he is again roaming the seas, as usual, in quest of low adventures among the ports of the east."

The conversation now changed, and soon after the Admiral and his attendants repaired to their different vessels.

"Of a verity, Señor Don Christoval," said Luis, as he walked alone with the great navigator towards the shore, "one little knoweth when he is acquiring fame, and when not. Though but an indifferent mariner, and no pilot, I find my exploits on the ocean are well bruited abroad! If your Excellency but gain half the reputation I already enjoy, by this present expedition, you will have reason to believe that your name will not be forgotten by posterity."

"It is a tribute the great pay for their elevation, Luis," returned the Admiral, "that all

their acts are commented on, and that they can do little that may be concealed from observation, or escape remarks."

"It would be as well, Señor Almirante, to throw into the scales, at once, calumnies, and lies, and uncharitableness, for all these are to be added to the list. Is it not wonderful, that a young man cannot visit a few foreign lands, in order to increase his knowledge and improve his parts, but all the gossips of Castile should fill their letters to the gossips of the Canaries, with passages touching his movements and demerits! By the Martyrs of the East! if I were Queen of Castile, there should be a law against writing of others' movements, and I do not know, but a law against women's writing letters at all!"

"In which case, Señor de Munos, thou would'st never possess the satisfaction of receiving a missive from the fairest hand in Castile."

"I mean a woman's writing to a woman, Don Christopher. As, to letters from noble maidens intended to cheer the hearts and ani-

mate the deeds of cavaliers who adore them, they are useful, out of doubt; and the saints be deaf to the miscreant who would forbid or intercept them! No, Señor, I trust that travelling hath at least made me liberal, by raising me above the narrow prejudices of provinces and cities, and I am far from wishing to put an end to letters from mistresses to their knights, or from parents to their children, or even from wives to their husbands; but, as for the letters of a gossip to a gossip, by your leave, Señor Almirante, I detest them just as much as the Father of Sin detests this expedition of ours!"

"An expedition, certainly, that he hath no great reason to love," answered Columbus, smiling, "since it will be followed by the light of revelation and the triumph of the cross. But what is thy will, friend, that thou seemest in waiting for me, to disburthen thyself of something. Thy name is Sancho Mundo, if I remember thy countenance?"

"Señor Don Almirante, your memory hath not mistaken," returned the person addressed,—

"I am Sancho Mundo, as your Excellency saith, sometimes called Sancho of the Shipyard Gate. I desire to say a few words concerning the fate of our voyage, whenever it shall suit you, noble Señor, to hear me where there are no ears present that you distrust."

"Thou may'st speak freely, now; this cavalier being my confidant and secretary."

"It is not necessary that I should tell a great pilot, like your Excellency, who is King of Portugal, of what the mariners of Lisbon have been about these many years, since you know all that better than myself. Therefore, I will just add, that they are discovering all the unknown lands they can for themselves, and preventing others, as much as in them lies, from doing the same thing."

"Don John of Portugal is an enlightened prince, fellow, and thou would'st do well to respect his character and rank. His Highness is a liberal sovereign, and hath sent many noble expeditions forth from his harbour."

"That he hath, Señor, and this last is not the least in its designs and intentions," answered

Sancho, turning a look of irony towards the Admiral, that showed that the fellow had more in reserve than he cared to divulge without some wheedling.—" No one doubts Don John's willingness to send forth expeditions."

" Thou hast heard some intelligence, Sancho, that it is proper I should know! Speak freely, and rely on my repaying any service of this sort to the full extent of its deservings."

" If your Excellency will have patience to hear me, I will give the whole story, with all minuteness and particularity, and that in a way to leave no part untold, and all parts to be as easily understood as heart can wish, or a priest in the confessional could desire."

" Speak; no one will interrupt thee. As thou art frank, so will be thy reward."

" Well, then, Señor Don Almirante, you must know that about eleven years since I made a voyage from Palos to Sicily, in a caravel belonging to the Pinzons, here; not to Martin Alonzo, who commandeth the Pinta, under your Excellency's orders, but to a kinsman of his late father's, who caused better

craft to be constructed than we are apt to get in these days of hurry, and rotten cordage, and careless caulking, to say nothing of the manner in which the canvass is ——"

"Nay, good Sancho," interrupted the impatient Luis, who was yet smarting under the remarks of Doña Inez's correspondent,—"thou forgettest night is near, and that the boat is waiting for the Admiral."

"How should I forget that, Señor, when I can see the sun just dipping into the water, and I belong to the boat myself, having left it in order to tell the noble Admiral what I have to say?"

"Permit the man to relate his story in his own manner, Señor Pedro, I pray thee," remarked Columbus. "Nought is gained by putting a seaman out in his reckoning."

"No, your Excellency, or in kicking with a mule. And so, as I was saying, I went that voyage to Sicily, and had for a messmate one José Gordo, a Portuguese by birth, but a man who liked the wines of Spain better than the puckering liquors of his own country, and so

sailed much in Spanish craft. I never well knew, notwithstanding, whether José was, in heart, most of a Portuguese or a Spaniard, though he was certainly but an indifferent Christian."

"It is to be hoped that his character hath improved," said Columbus, calmly.—"As I foresee that something is to follow on the testimony of this José, you will let me say, that an indifferent Christian is but an indifferent witness. Tell me, at once, therefore, what he hath communicated, that I may judge for myself of the value of his words."

"Now, he that doubteth your Excellency will not discover Cathay is a heretic, seeing that you have discovered my secret without having heard it! José has just arrived in the felucca that is riding near the Santa Maria, and hearing that we were an expedition that had one Sancho Mundo engaged in it, he came speedily on board of us to see his old shipmate."

"All that is so plain, that I wonder thou thinkest it worthy of relating, Sancho; but,

now we have him safe on board the good ship, we can come at once to the subject of his communication."

"That may we, Señor; and so, without any unnecessary delay, I will state that the subject was touching Don John of Portugal, Don Ferdinand of Arragon, Doña Isabella of Castile, your Excellency Señor Don Almirante, the Señor de Munos here, and myself."

"This is a strange company!" exclaimed Luis, laughing, while he slipped a piece of eight into the hand of the sailor; "perhaps that may aid thee in shortening the story of the singular conjunction."

"Another, Señor, would bring the tale to an end at once. To own the truth, José is behind that wall, and as he told me he thought his news worth a dobla, he will be greatly displeased at finding I have received my half of it, while his half still remaineth unpaid."

"This, then, will set his mind at rest," said Columbus, placing an entire dobla in the hand of the cunning fellow, for the Admiral perceived by his manner, that Sancho had really

something of importance to communicate.—"Thou canst summon José to thy aid, and deliver thyself, at once, of thy burthen."

Sancho did as directed, and in a minute José had appeared, had received the dobla, weighed it deliberately on his finger, pocketed it, and commenced his tale. Unlike the artful Sancho, he told his story at once, beginning at the right end, and ceasing to speak as soon as he had no more to communicate. The substance of the tale is soon related. José had come from Ferro, and had seen three armed caravels, wearing the flag of Portugal, cruising among the islands, under circumstances that left little doubt their object was to intercept the Castilian expedition. As the man referred to a passenger or two, who had landed within the hour, to corroborate his statement, Columbus and Luis immediately sought the lodgings of these persons, in order to hear their report of the matter. The result proved that the sailor had stated nothing but what was true.

"Of all our difficulties and embarrassments, Luis," resumed the Admiral, as the two finally

proceeded to the shore, "this is much the most serious! We may be detained altogether by these treacherous Portuguese, or we may be followed in our voyage, and have our fair laurels seized upon by others, and all the benefits so justly due for our toil and risk usurped, or at least disputed, by men who had not the enterprise and knowledge to accept the boon, when fairly offered to them."

"Don John of Portugal must have sent far better knights than the Moors of Granada to do the feat," answered Luis, who had a Spaniard's distaste for his peninsular neighbours; "he is a bold and learned prince they say, but the commission and ensigns of the sovereign of Castile are not to be disregarded, and that, too, in the midst of her own islands, here."

"We have no force fit to contend with that which hath most probably been sent against us. The number and size of our vessels are known, and the Portuguese, questionless, have resorted to the means necessary to effect their purposes, whatever those purposes may be. Alas! Luis, my lot hath been hard, though I

humbly trust that the end will repay me for all! Years did I sue the Portuguese to enter fairly into this voyage, and to endeavour to do that, in all honour, which our gracious mistress, Doña Isabella, hath now so creditably commenced; they listened to my reasons and entreaties with cold ears,—nay, repelled them with ridicule and disdain; and, yet, here am I scarce fairly embarked in the execution of schemes that they have so often derided, than they endeavour to defeat me by violence and treachery."

"Noble Don Christoval, we will die to a Castilian, ere this shall come to pass!"

"Our only hope is in speedy departure. Thanks to the industry and zeal of Martin Alonzo, the Pinta is ready, and we may quit Gomera with the morning's sun. I doubt if they will have the hardihood to follow us into the trackless and unknown Atlantic, without any other guides than their own feeble knowledge; and we will depart with the return of the sun. All now dependeth on quitting the Canaries unseen."

As this was said, they reached the boat, and were quickly pulled on board the Santa Maria. By this time the peaks of the islands were towering like gloomy shadows in the atmosphere; and, soon after, the caravels resembled dark, shapeless specks on the unquiet element that washed their hulls.

CHAPTER VI.

They little thought how pure a light,
With years, should gather round that day;
How love should keep their memories bright—
How wide a realm their sons should sway.

BRYANT.

THE night that succeeded was one of very varied feelings among the adventurers. As soon as Sancho secured the reward, he had no further scruples about communicating all he knew to any who were disposed to listen; and long ere Columbus returned on board the vessel, the intelligence had spread from mouth to mouth, until all in the little squadron were apprised of the intentions of the Portuguese. Many hoped that it was true, and that their pursuers might be successful; any fate being preferable, in their eyes, to that which

the voyage promised; but, such is the effect of strife, much the larger portion of the crew were impatient to lift the anchors and to make sail, if it were only to get the mastery in the race. Columbus, himself, experienced the deepest concern, for it really seemed as if a hard fortune was about to snatch the cup from his lips, just as it had been raised there, after all his cruel sufferings and delays. He consequently passed a night of deep anxiety, and was the first to rise in the morning.

Every one was on the alert with the dawn; and as the preparations had been completed the previous night, by the time the sun had risen the three vessels were under way, the Pinta leading, as usual. The wind was light, and the squadron could barely gather steerage way; but as every moment was deemed precious, the vessels' heads were kept to the westward. When a short time out, a caravel came flapping past them, after having been several hours in sight, and the Admiral spoke her. She proved to be from Ferro, the most southern and western island of the group, and had

come nearly on the route the expedition intended to steer, until they quitted the known seas.

"Dost thou bring any tidings from Ferro?" inquired Columbus, as the strange ship drifted slowly past the Santa Maria; the progress of each vessel being little more than a mile in the hour.—"Is there aught of interest in that quarter?"

"Did I know whether or not I am speaking to Don Christopher Columbus, the Genoese that their Highnesses have honoured with so important a commission, I should feel more warranted to answer what I have both heard and seen, Señor," was the reply.

"I am Don Christopher himself, their Highnesses' admiral and viceroy for all seas and lands that we may discover, and, as thou hast said, a Genoese in birth, though a Castilian by duty and in lové to the Queen."

"Then, noble Admiral, I may tell you that the Portuguese are active, three of their caravels being off Ferro at this moment, with the hope of intercepting your expedition."

"How is this known, friend, and what rea-

sons have I for supposing that the Portuguese will dare to send forth caravels, with orders to molest those who sail as the officers of Isabella the Catholic? They must know that the Holy Father hath lately conferred this title on the two sovereigns, in acknowledgment of their great services in expelling the Moor from Christendom."

"Señor, there hath been a rumour of that among the islands, but little will the Portuguese care for aught of that nature, when he deemeth his gold in danger. As I quitted Ferro I spoke the caravels, and have good reason to think that rumour doth them no injustice."

"Did they seem warlike, and made they any pretensions to a right to interrupt our voyage?"

"To us they said nought of this sort, except to inquire, tauntingly, if the illustrious Don Christoval Colon, the great viceroy of the East, sailed on board us. As for preparations, Señor, they had many lombardas, and a multitude of men in breast-plates and casques. I

doubt if soldiers are as numerous at the Azores as when they sailed."

"Keep they close in with the island, or stretch they off to sea-ward?"

"Mostly the latter, Señor, standing far towards the west in the morning, and beating up towards the land as the day closeth. Take the word of an old pilot, Don Christopher, the mongrels are there for no good."

This was barely audible; for, by this time, the caravels had drifted past each other, and were soon altogether beyond the reach of the voice.

"Do you believe that the Castilian name standeth so low, Don Christopher," demanded Luis, "that these dogs of Portuguese dare do this wrong to the flag of the Queen?"

"I dread nought from force, beyond detention and frauds, certainly; but these, to me, at this moment, would be little less painful than death. Most do I apprehend that these caravels, under the pretence of protecting the rights of Don John, are directed to follow us to Cathay, in which case we should have a dis-

puted discovery, and divided honours. We must avoid the Portuguese, if possible; to effect which purpose I intend to pass to the westward, without nearing the island of Ferro, any closer than may be rendered absolutely indispensable."

Notwithstanding a burning impatience now beset the Admiral and most of the crew, the elements seemed opposed to his passage from among the Canaries, into the open ocean. The wind gradually failed, until it became so calm that the sails were hauled up, and the three vessels lay, now laving their sides with the brine, and now rising to the summit of the ground-swell, resembling huge animals that were lazily reposing, under the heats of summer, in drowsy indolence.

Frequent was the secret *pater* or *ave* that was mumbled by the mariners, and not a few vows of future prayers were made, in the hope of obtaining a breeze. Occasionally it seemed as if Providence listened to these petitions, for the air would fan the cheek, and the sails would fall, in the vain expectation of getting a-head;

but disappointment as often followed, until all on board felt that they were fated to linger under the visitation of a calm. Just at night-fall, however, a light air arose, and, for a few hours, the wash of the parted waters was audible under the bows of the vessels, though their way was barely sufficient to keep them under the command of their helms. About midnight, however, even this scarcely perceptible motion was lost, and the craft were again lazily wallowing in the ground-swells that the gales had sent in from the vast expanse of the Western Ocean.

When the light reappeared the Admiral found himself between Gomera and Teneriffe, the lofty peak of the latter casting its pointed shadow, like that thrown by a planet, far upon the water, until its sharp apex was renewed, in faint mimicry, along the glassy surface of the ocean. Columbus was now fearful that the Portuguese might employ their boats, or impel some light felucca by her sweeps, in order to find out his position; and he wisely directed the sails to be furled, in order to conceal his

vessels, as far as possible, from any prying eyes. The season had advanced to the 7th of September, and such was the situation of this renowned expedition, exactly five weeks after it had left Spain; for this inauspicious calm occurred on a Friday, or on that day of the week on which it had originally sailed.

All practice shows that there is no refuge from a calm at sea, except in patience. Columbus was much too experienced a navigator not to feel this truth, and, after using the precaution mentioned, he, and the pilots under him, turned their attention to the arrangements required to render the future voyage safe and certain. The few mathematical instruments known to the age were got up, corrected, and exhibited, with the double intention of ascertaining their state, and of making a display before the common men, that would heighten their respect for their leaders by adding to their confidence in their skill. The Admiral, himself, had already obtained a high reputation as a navigator among his followers, in consequence of his reckonings having proved so

much more accurate than those of the pilots, in approaching the Canaries; and as he now exhibited the instrument then used as a quadrant, and examined his compasses, every movement he made was watched by the seamen, with either secret admiration or jealous vigilance; some openly expressing their confidence in his ability to proceed wherever he wished to go, and others covertly betraying just that degree of critical knowledge which ordinarily accompanies prejudice, ignorance, and malice.

Luis had never been able to comprehend the mysteries of navigation, his noble head appearing to repudiate learning, as a species of accomplishment but little in accordance with its wants or its tastes. Still, he was intelligent; and within the range of knowledge that it was usual for laymen of his rank to attain, few of his age did themselves more credit in the circles of the court. Fortunately, he had the most perfect reliance on the means of the Admiral; and being almost totally without personal apprehensions, Columbus had not a more

submissive or blind follower, than the young grandee, under his command.

Man, with all his boasted philosophy, intelligence, and reason, exists the dupe of his own imagination and blindness as much as of the artifices and designs of others. Even while he fancies himself the most vigilant and cautious, he is as often misled by appearances as governed by facts and judgment; and perhaps half of those who were spectators of this calculated care in Columbus, believed that they felt, in their renewed confidence, the assurances of science and logical deductions, when in truth their senses were impressed, without, in the slightest degree, enlightening their understandings.

Thus passed the day of the 7th September, the night arriving and still finding the little squadron, or fleet as it was termed in the lofty language of the day, floating helplessly between Teneriffe and Gomera. Nor did the ensuing morning bring a change, for a burning sun beat, unrelieved by a breath of air, on the surface of a sea that was glittering like molten

silver. When the Admiral was certain, however, by having sent men aloft to examine the horizon, that the Portuguese were not in sight, he felt infinitely relieved, little doubting that his pursuers still lay, as inactive as himself, to the westward of Ferro.

"By the seamen's hopes! Señor Don Christopher," said Luis, as he reached the poop, where Columbus had kept an untiring watch for hours, he himself having just risen from a siesta, "the fiends seem to be leagued against us! Here are we in the third day of our calm, with the Peak of Teneriffe as stationary as if it were a mile-stone, set to tell the porpoises and dolphins the rate at which they swim. If one believed in omens, he might fancy that the saints were unwilling to see us depart, even though it be on their own errand."

"We *may not* believe in omens, when they are no more than the fruits of natural laws," gravely returned the Admiral.—"There will shortly be an end of this calm, for a haze is gathering in the atmosphere that promises air

from the east, and the motion of the ship will tell thee, that the winds have been busy far to the westward. Master Pilot," addressing the officer of that title, who had charge of the deck at the moment, " thou wilt do well to unfurl thy canvass, and prepare for a favouring breeze, as we shall soon be overtaken by wind from the north-east."

This prediction was verified about an hour later, when all three of the vessels began again to part the waters with their stems. But the breeze, if anything, proved more tantalising to the impatient mariners than the calm itself had been; for a strong head sea had got up, and the air proving light, the different craft struggled with difficulty towards the west.

All this time a most anxious look-out was kept for the Portuguese caravels, the appearance of which, however, was less dreaded than it had been, as they were now supposed to be a considerable distance to leeward. Columbus, and his skilful assistants, Martin Alonzo and Vicente Yañez, or the brothers Pinzon, who commanded the Pinta and the Niña, practised

all the means that their experience could suggest to get a-head. Their progress, however, was not only slow but painful, as every fresh impulse given by the breeze served to plunge the bows of the vessel into the sea with a violence that threatened injuries to the spars and rigging. So trifling, indeed, was their rate of sailing, that it required all the judgment of Columbus to note the nearly imperceptible manner in which the tall, cone-like summit of the Peak of Teneriffe lowered, as it might be, inch by inch. The superstitious feelings of the common men being more active than usual, even some among them began to whisper that the elements were admonishing them against proceeding, and that tardy as it might seem, the Admiral would do well to attend to omens and signs that Nature seldom gave without sufficient reason. These opinions, however, were cautiously uttered, the grave earnest manner of Columbus having created so much respect, as to suppress them in his presence; and the mariners of the other vessels still followed the movements of their Admiral with that spe-

cies of blind dependence which marks the submission of the inferior to the superior, under such circumstances.

When Columbus retired to his cabin for the night, Luis observed that his countenance was unusually grave, as he ended his calculations of the day's work.

"I trust all goes to your wishes, Don Christopher," the young man gaily observed. "We are now fairly on our journey, and, to my eyes, Cathay is already in sight."

"Thou hast that within thee, Don Luis," returned the Admiral, "which rendereth what thou wishest to see distinct, and maketh all colours gay. With me it is a duty to see things as they *are*; and, although Cathay lieth plainly before the vision of my mind—thou, Lord, who hast implanted, for thine own great ends, the desire to reach that distant land, only knowest how plainly!—although Cathay is thus plain to my moral view, I am bound to heed the physical obstacles that may exist to our reaching it."

"And are these obstacles becoming more serious than we could hope, Señor?"

"My trust is still in God,—look here, young lord," laying his finger on the chart; "at this point were we in the morning, and to this point have we advanced by means of all the toil of the day, down to this portion of the night. Thou seest that a line of paper marketh the whole of our progress; and, here again, thou seest that we have to cross this vast desert of ocean, ere we may even hope to draw near the end of our journey. By my calculation, with all our exertions, and at this critical moment—critical not only as regardeth the Portuguese, but critical as regardeth our own people — we have made but nine leagues, which are a small portion of the thousands that lie before us. At this rate we may dread a failure of our provisions and water."

"I have all confidence in your resources, Don Christopher, and in your knowledge and experience."

"And I have all confidence in the protection

of God; trusting that he will not desert his servant in the moment that he most needeth his support."

Here Columbus prepared himself to catch a few hours' sleep, though it was in his clothes, the interest he felt in the position of his vessels forbidding him to undress. This celebrated man lived in an age when a spurious philosophy, and a pretending but insufficient exercise of reason, placed few, even in appearance, above the frank admission of their constant reliance on a divine power. We say in appearance, as no man, whatever may be the extent of his delusions on this subject, really believes that he is altogether sufficient for his own protection. This absolute self-reliance is forbidden by a law of nature, each carrying in his own breast a monitor to teach him his real insignificance, demonstrating daily, hourly, at each minute even, that he is but a diminutive agent used by a superior power in carrying out its own great and mysterious ends, for the sublime and beneficent purposes for which the world and all it contains has been created. In

compliance with the usage of the times, Columbus knelt, and prayed fervently, ere he slept; nor did Luis de Bobadilla hesitate about imitating an example that few, in that day, thought beneath their intelligence or their manhood. If religion had the taint of superstition in the fifteenth century, and men confided too much in the efficacy of momentary and transient impulses, it is certain that it also possessed an exterior of graceful meekness and submission to God, in losing which, it may be well questioned, if the world has been the gainer.

The first appearance of light brought the Admiral and Luis to the deck. They both knelt again on the poop, and repeated their paters; and then, yielding to the feelings natural to their situation, they arose, eager to watch for what might be revealed by the lifting of the curtain of day. The approach of dawn, and the rising of the sun at sea, have been so often described, that the repetition here might be superfluous; but we shall state that Luis watched the play of colours that adorned the

eastern sky with a lover's refinement of feeling, fancying that he traced a resemblance to the passage of emotions across the tell-tale countenance of Mercedes, in the soft and transient hues that are known to precede a fine morning in September, more especially in a low latitude. As for the Admiral, his more practical gaze was turned in the direction in which the island of Ferro lay, awaiting the increase of the light in order to ascertain what changes had been wrought during the hours he had slept. Several minutes passed in profound attention, when the navigator beckoned Luis to his side.

"Seest thou that dark, gloomy pile, which is heaving up out of the darkness, here at the south and west of us?" he said; "it gaineth form and distinctness at each instant, though distant some eight or ten leagues: that is Ferro; and the Portuguese are there, without question, anxiously expecting our appearance. In this calm, neither can approach the other, and thus far we are safe. It is now necessary to ascertain if the pursuing caravels are between us and the land, or not; after which,

should it prove otherwise, we shall be reasonably safe, if we approach no nearer to the island, and we can maintain, as yesterday, the advantage of the wind. Seest thou any sail, Luis, in that quarter of the ocean?"

"None, Señor; and the light is already of sufficient strength to expose the white canvass of a vessel, were any there."

Columbus made an ejaculation of thankfulness, and immediately ordered the look-outs aloft to examine the entire horizon. The report was favourable; the dreaded Portuguese caravels being nowhere visible. As the sun arose, however, a breeze sprang up at the southward and westward, bringing Ferro, and consequently any vessels that might be cruising in that quarter, directly to windward of the fleet. Sail was made without the loss of a moment; and the Admiral stood to the northward and westward, trusting that his pursuers were looking out for him on the south side of the island, which was the ground where those who did not thoroughly understand his aim would be most likely to expect him. By this time

the westerly swell had, in a great measure, gone down; and though the progress of the vessels was far from rapid, it was steady, and seemed likely to last. The hours went slowly by, and as the day advanced, objects became less and less distinct on the sides of Ferro. Its entire surface next took the hazy appearance of a dim and ill-defined cloud; and then it began slowly to sink into the water. Its summit was still visible, as the Admiral, with the more privileged of his companions, assembled on the poop to take a survey of the ocean and of the weather. The most indifferent observer might now have noted the marked difference in the state of feeling which existed among the adventurers on board the Santa Maria. On the poop all was cheerfulness and hope, the present escape having induced even the distrustful, momentarily, to forget the uncertain future; the pilots, as usual, were occupied and sustained by a species of marine stoicism, while a melancholy had settled on the crew that was as apparent as if they were crowding around the

dead. Nearly every man in the ship was in some one of the groups that had assembled on deck; and every eye seemed riveted, as it might be by enchantment, on the fading and falling heights of Ferro. While things were in this state, Columbus approached Luis, and aroused him from a sort of trance, by laying a finger lightly on his shoulder.

"It can not be that the Señor de Muños is affected by the feelings of the common men," observed the Admiral, with a slight mixture of surprise and reproach; "this, too, at a moment that all, of an intelligence sufficient to foresee the glorious consequences, are rejoicing that a heaven-sent breeze is carrying us to a safe distance from the pursuing and envious caravels! Why dost thou thus regard the people beneath thee with a steady eye and unwavering look? Is it that thou repentest embarking, or dost thou merely muse on the charms of thy mistress?"

"By San Iago! Don Christopher, this time your sagacity is at fault. I neither repent, nor

muse as you would imply; but I gaze at yonder poor fellows with pity for their apprehensions."

"Ignorance is a hard master, Señor Pedro, and one that is now exercising his power over the imaginations of the seamen with the ruthlessness of a tyrant. They dread the worst, merely because they have not the knowledge to foresee the best. Fear is a stronger passion than hope, and is ever the near ally of ignorance. In vulgar eyes, that which hath not yet been, — nay, which hath not in some measure become familiar by use,—is deemed impossible; men reasoning in a circle that is abridged by their information. Those fellows are gazing at the island as it disappears like men taking a last look at the things of life. Indeed this concern exceedeth even what I could have anticipated."

"It lieth deep, Señor, and yet it riseth to the eyes; for I have seen tears on cheeks that I could never have supposed wetted in any manner but by the spray of the ocean!"

"There are our two acquaintances, Sancho

and Pepe, neither of whom seemeth particularly distressed, though the last hath a cast of melancholy in his face. As for the first, the knave showeth the indifference of a true mariner; one who is never so happy as when farthest from the dangers of rocks and shoals: to such a man the disappearance of one island and the appearance of another, are alike matters of indifference. He seeth but the visible horizon around him, and considereth the rest of the world, temporarily, as a blank. I look for loyal service in that Sancho, in despite of his knavery, and count upon him as one of the truest of my followers."

Here the Admiral was interrupted by a cry from the deck beneath him, and, looking round, his practised and quick eye was not slow in discovering that the horizon to the southward presented the usual watery blank of the open ocean. Ferro had, in fact, altogether disappeared, some of the most sanguine of the seamen having fancied that they beheld it, even after it had finally sunk behind the barrier of waves. As the circumstance became more and

more certain the lamentations among the people grew less and less equivocal and louder, tears flowed without shame or concealment, hands were wrung in a sort of senseless despair, and a scene of such clamour ensued as threatened some serious danger to the expedition from this new quarter. Under such circumstances Columbus had all the people collected beneath the break of the poop, and standing on the latter, where he could examine every countenance for himself, he addressed them on the subject of their grief. On this occasion the manner of the great navigator was earnest and sincere, leaving no doubt that he fully believed in the truth of his own arguments, and that he uttered nothing with the hope to delude or to mislead.

"When Don Ferdinand and Doña Isabella, our respected and beloved sovereigns, honoured me with the commission of Admiral and Viceroy in those secret seas towards which we are now steering," he said, "I considered it as the most glorious and joyful event of my life, as I now consider this moment, that seemeth to

some among you so painful, as second to it in hope and cause for felicitation. In the disappearance of Ferro, I see also the disappearance of the Portuguese; for, now that we are in the open ocean, without the limits of any known land, I trust that Providence hath placed us beyond the reach and machinations of all our enemies. While we prove true to ourselves, and to the great objects that are before us, there is no longer cause for fear. If any person among you hath a mind to disburthen himself in this matter, let him speak freely, we being much too strong in argument to wish to silence doubts by authority."

"Then, Señor Don Almirante," answered Sancho, whose tongue was ever ready to wag, as occasions offered, "it is just that which maketh your Excellency so joyful that maketh these honest people so sad. Could they always keep the island of Ferro in sight, or any other known land, they would follow you to Cathay with as gentle a pull as the launch followeth the caravel in a light breeze and smooth water; but it is this leaving all behind, as it might

be, earth as well as wives and children, that saddens their hearts and uncorks their tears."

"And thou, Sancho, an old mariner that wast born at sea —"

"Nay, your Excellency, illustrious Señor Don Almirante," interrupted Sancho, looking up with pretended simplicity, "not exactly at sea, though within the scent of its odour; since, having been found at the shipwright's gate, it is not probable they would have made a haven just to land so small a part of the freight."

"Well, born *near* the sea, if thou wilt; but from thee I expect better things than unmanly lamentations because an island hath sunk below the horizon."

"Excellency, you may. It mattereth little to Sancho if half the islands in the sea were sunk a good deal lower. There are the Cape de Verdes, now, which I never wish to look upon again, and Lampidosa, besides Stromboli and others in that quarter, would be better out of the way, than where they are, for any good they do us seamen. But if your Excel-

lency will condescend to tell these honest people whither it is that we are bound, and what you expect to find in port, and, more especially, when we are to come back, it would comfort them in an unspeakable degree."

"As I hold it to be the proper office of men in authority to let their motives be known, when no evil followeth the disclosure, this will I most cheerfully do, requiring the attention of all near me, and chiefly of those who are most uneasy concerning our present position and future movements. The end of our voyage is Cathay, a country that is known to lie in the uttermost eastern extremity of Asia, whither it hath been more than once reached by Christian travellers; and its difference from all other voyages, or journeys, that may have been attempted in order to reach the same country, is in the circumstance that we go west, while former travellers have proceeded east. But this is effecting our purposes by means that belong only to stout-hearted mariners, since none but those who are familiar with the ocean, skilful pilots, and obedient and ready seamen,

can traverse the waters, without better guides than the knowledge of the stars, currents, winds, and other phenomena of the Atlantic, and such aids as may be gleaned from science. The reason on which I act, is a conviction that the earth is round, whence it followeth that the Atlantic, which we know to possess an eastern boundary of land, must also have a western; and from certain calculations, that leave it almost certain that this continent, which I hold will prove to be India, cannot lie more than some twenty-five or thirty days' sailing, if as many, from our own Europe. Having thus told when and where I expect to find the country we seek, I will now touch a little on the advantages that we may all expect to derive from the discovery. According to the accounts of a certain Marco Polo, and his relatives, gentlemen of Venice, and men of fair credit and good reputations, the kingdom of Cathay is not only one of the most extensive known, but one that most aboundeth in gold and silver, together with the other metals of value, and precious stones. Of the advantages

of the discovery of such a land to yourselves, ye may judge by its advantages to me. Their Highnesses have dignified me with the rank of Admiral and Viceroy, in anticipation of our success; and, persevering to a successful termination of your efforts, the humblest man among ye may look with confidence to some signal mark of their favour. Rewards will doubtless be rendered in proportion to your merits; he that deserveth much receiving more than he who hath deserved less. Still will there be sufficient for all. Marco Polo and his relatives dwelt seventeen years in the court of the Great Khan, and were every way qualified to give a true account of the riches and resources of those regions; and well were they, simple Venetian gentlemen, without any other means than could be transported on the backs of beasts of burthen, rewarded for their toils and courage. The jewels alone with which they returned served long to enrich their race, renovating a decayed but honourable family, while they did their enterprise and veracity credit in the eyes of men.

"As the ocean, for a long distance this side of the continent of Asia and the kingdom of Cathay, is known to abound with islands, we may expect first to meet with them, where it would be doing nature herself injustice did we not anticipate fragrant freights of balmy spices, and other valuable commodities with which that favoured quarter of the earth, it is certain, is enriched. Indeed, it is scarce possible for the imagination to conceive of the magnitude of the results that await our success, while nought but ridicule and contempt could attend a hasty and inconsiderate return. Going not as invaders, but as Christians and friends, we have no reason to expect other than the most friendly reception; and, no doubt, the presents and gifts alone, that will naturally be offered to strangers who have come so far, and by a road that hath hitherto been untravelled, will forty-fold repay you for all your toils and troubles."

"I say nothing of the honour of being among those who have first carried the cross to the heathen world," continued the Admiral,

uncovering himself, and looking around him with solemn gravity, " though our fathers believed it to be no little distinction to have been one in the armies that contended for the possession of the sepulchre. But neither the church, nor its great master, forgetteth the servitor that advanceth its interests, and we may all look for blessings, both here and hereafter."

As he concluded, Columbus devoutly crossed himself, and withdrew from the sight of his people among those who were on the poop. The effect of this address was for the moment very salutary, and the men saw the clouds that hung over the land disappear, like the land itself, with less feeling than they had previously manifested. Nevertheless, they remained distrustful and sad, some dreaming that night of the pictures that Columbus had drawn of the glories of the East, and others fancying in their sleep, that demons were luring them into unknown seas, where they were doomed to wander for ever, as a punishment for their sins; conscience asserting its power,

in all situations, and most vividly in those of distrust and uncertainty.

Shortly before sunset, the Admiral caused the three vessels to heave-to, and the two Pinzons to repair on board his own ship. Here he laid before these persons his orders and plans for their government, in the event of a separation.

"Thus you will understand me, Señores," he concluded, after having explained at length his views: "Your first and gravest duty will be to keep near the Admiral, in all weather, and under every circumstance, so long as it may be possible; but, failing of the possibility, you will make your way due westward, on this parallel of latitude, until you have gone seven hundred leagues from the Canaries; after which you are to lie-to at night, as, by that time, it is probable you will be among the islands of Asia; and it will be both prudent and necessary to our objects, to be more on the alert for discoveries, from that moment. Still, you will proceed westward, relying on seeing me at the

court of the Great Khan, should Providence deny us an earlier meeting."

"This is well, Señor Almirante," returned Martin Alonzo, raising his eyes, which had long been riveted on the chart; "but it will be far better for all to keep together, and chiefly so to us, who are little used to the habits of princes, if we await your excellency's protection before we rush unheedingly into the presence of a sovereign as potent as the Grand Khan."

"Thou showest thy usual prudence, good Martin Alonzo, and I much commend thee for it. It were, indeed, better that thou should'st wait my arrival, since that eastern potentate may conceive himself better treated by receiving the first visit from the viceroy of the sovereigns, who is the bearer of letters directly from his own royal master and mistress, than by receiving it from one of inferior rank. Look thou well to the islands and their products, Señor Pinzon, should'st thou first gain those seas, and await my appearance, before

thou, proceedest to aught else. How stand thy people affected on taking leave of the land?"

"Ill enough, Señor; so much so, indeed, as to put me in fear of a mutiny. There are those in the Pinta who need to stand in wholesome dread of the anger of their Highnesses, to prevent their making a sudden and violent return to Palos."

"Thou would'st do well to look sharply to this spirit, that it may be kept under. Deal kindly and gently with these disaffected spirits as long as may be, encouraging them by all fair and reasonable promises; but beware that the distemper get not the mastery of thy authority. And now, Señores, as the night approacheth, take boat and return to your vessels, that we may profit by the breeze."

When Columbus was again alone with Luis, he sate in his little cabin, with a hand supporting his head, musing like one lost in reflection.

"Thou hast long known this Martin Alonzo, Don Luis de Bobadilla?" he at length asked,

betraying the current of his thoughts, by the nature of the question.

"Long, Señor, as youths count time; though it would seem but a day in the calculations of aged men."

"Much dependeth on him; I hope he may prove honest; as yet he hath shown himself liberal, enterprising, and manly."

"He is human, Don Christopher, and therefore liable to err. Yet, as men go, I esteem Martin Alonzo far from being among the worst of his race. He hath not embarked in this enterprise under knightly vows, nor with any churchman's zeal; but give him the chance of a fair return for his risks, and you will find him as true as interest ever leaveth a man, when there is any occasion to try his selfishness."

"Then thee, only, will I trust with my secret. Look at this paper, Luis. Here thou seest that I have been calculating our progress since morning, and I find that we have come full nineteen leagues, though it be not in a direct westerly line. Should I let the

people know how far we may have truly come, at the end of some great distance, there being no land visible, fear will get the mastery over them, and no man can foresee the consequences. I shall write down publicly, therefore, but fifteen leagues, keeping the true reckoning sacred for thine eye and mine. God will forgive me this deception, in consideration that it is practised in the interest of his own church. By making these small deductions daily, it will enable us to advance a thousand leagues, without awakening alarm sufficient for more than seven or eight hundred.

"This is reducing courage to a scale I little dreamed of, Señor," returned Luis, laughing. "By San Luis, my true patron! we should think ill of the knight who found it necessary to uphold his heart by a measurement of leagues."

"All unknown evils are dreaded evils. Distance hath its terrors for the ignorant, and it may justly have its terrors for the wise, young noble, when it is measured on a trackless

ocean; and there ariseth another question touching those great staples of life, food and water."

With this slight reproof of the levity of his young friend, the Admiral prepared himself for his hammock by kneeling and repeating the prayers of the hour.

CHAPTER VII.

Whither, 'midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

BRYANT.

THE slumbers of Columbus were of short duration. While his sleep lasted it was profound, like that of a man who has so much control over his will as to have reduced the animal functions to its domination, for he awoke regularly at short intervals, in order that his watchful eye might take a survey of the state of the weather, and of the condition of his vessels. On this occasion the Admiral was on deck again, a little after one, where he found all things seemingly in that quiet and inspiring calm that ordinarily marks, in fine

weather, a middle watch at sea. The men on deck mostly slumbered, the drowsy pilot, and the steersman, with a look-out or two, alone remaining erect and awake. The wind had freshened, and the caravel was ploughing her way ahead with an untiring industry, leaving Ferro and its dangers at each instant more and more remote. The only noises that were audible, were the gentle sighing of the wind among the cordage, the wash of the water, and the occasional creaking of a yard, as the breeze forced it, with a firmer pressure, to distend its tackle and to strain its fittings.

The night was dark, and it required a moment to accustom the eye to objects by a light so feeble: when this was done, however, the Admiral discovered that the ship was not close by the wind, as he had ordered that she should be kept. Walking to the helm, he perceived that it was so far borne up as to cause her head to fall off towards the north-east, which was, in fact, in the direction to Spain.

"Art thou a seaman, and disregardest thy course in this heedless manner?" sternly de-

manded the Admiral; "or art thou only a muleteer, who fancieth he is merely winding his way along a path of the mountains. Thy heart is in Spain, and thou thinkest that a vain wish to return may meet with some relief in this idle artifice!"

"Alas, Señor Almirante! your Excellency hath judged rightly in believing that my heart is in Spain, where it ought to be, moreover, as I have left behind me at Moguer seven motherless children."

"Dost thou not know, fellow, that I too am a father, and that the dearest objects of a father's hopes are left behind me also? In what, then, dost thou differ from me, my son being also without a mother's care?"

"Excellency, he hath an Admiral for a father, whilst my boys have only a helmsman!"

"And what will it matter to Don Diego,"— Columbus was fond of dwelling on the honours he had received from the sovereigns, even though it were a little irregularly, — "what will it matter to Don Diego, my son, that his

parent perished an Admiral, if he perish at all; and in what will he profit more than your children, when he findeth himself altogether without a parent?"

"Señor, it will profit him to be cherished by the King and Queen, to be honoured as your child, and to be fostered and fed as the offspring of a viceroy, instead of being cast aside as the issueof a nameless mariner."

"Friend, thou hast some reason in this, and insomuch I respect thy feelings," answered Columbus, who, like our own Washington, appears to have always submitted to a lofty and pure sense of justice,—"but thou would'st do well to remember the influence that thy manly and successful perseverance in this voyage may produce on the welfare of thy children, instead of thus dwelling on weak forebodings of ills that are little likely to come to pass. Neither of us hath much to expect, should we fail of our discoveries, while both may hope everything should we succeed. Can I trust thee now, to keep the ship on her course, or must I send for another mariner to relieve the helm?"

"It may be better, noble Admiral, to do the last. I will bethink me of thy counsel, and strive with my longings for home; but it would be safer to seek another for this duty, while we are so near to Spain."

"Dost thou know one Sancho Mundo, a common seaman of this crew?"

"Señor, we all know him; he hath the name of the most skilful of our craft, of all in Moguer."

"Is he of thy watch, or sleepeth he with his fellows of the relief below?"

"Señor, he is of our watch, and sleepeth not with his fellows below, for the reason that he sleepeth on deck. No care or danger can unsettle the confidence of Sancho. To him the sight of land is so far an evil, that I doubt if he will rejoice should we ever reach those distant countries that your Excellency seemeth to expect we may."

"Go find this Sancho, and bid him come hither: I will discharge thy office the while."

Columbus now took the helm with his own hands, and with a light play of the tiller

brought the ship immediately up as near the wind as she would lie. The effect was felt in more quick and sudden plunges into the sea, a deeper heel to leeward, and a fresh creaking aloft, that denoted a renewed and increased strain on all the spars and their tackle. In the course of a few minutes, however, Sancho appeared, rubbing his eyes and yawning.

"Take thou this duty," said the Admiral, as soon as the man was near him, "and discharge it faithfully. Those who have been here already have proved unfaithful, suffering the vessel to fall off, in the direction of Spain: I expect better things of thee. I think, friend Sancho, I may count on thee as a true and faithful follower, even in extremity."

"Señor Don Almirante," said Sancho, who took the helm, giving it a little play to feel his command of it, as a skilful coachman brings his team in subjection on first assuming the reins, "I am a servant of the Crown's, and your inferior and subordinate; such duty as becometh me I am ready to discharge."

"Thou hast no fear of this voyage, — no

childish forebodings of becoming an endless wanderer in an unknown sea, without hope of ever seeing wife or child again?"

"Señor, you seem to know our hearts as well as if your Excellency had made them with your own hands, and then put them into our miserable bodies."

"Thou hast, then, none of these unsuitable and unseamanlike apprehensions?"

"Not as much, Excellency, as would raise an ave in a parish priest, or a sigh in an old woman. I may have my misgivings, for we all have weaknesses,—but none of them incline to any dread of sailing about the ocean, since that is my happiness; nor to any concern about wife and children, not having the first, and wishing not to think I have the last."

"If thou hast misgivings, name them. I could wish to make one firm as thou wholly my friend."

"I doubt not, Señor, that we shall reach Cathay, or whatever country your Excellency may choose to seek; I make no question of your ability to beard the Great Khan, and, at

need, to strip the very jewels from his turban, —as turban he must have, being an Infidel: nor do I feel any misgivings about the magnitude and richness of our discoveries and freights, since I believe, Señor Don Almirante, you are skilful enough to take the caravels in at one end of the earth and out at the other; or, even to load them with carbuncles, should diamonds be wanting."

"If thou hast this faith in thy leader, what other distrust can give thee concern?"

"I distrust the value of the share, whether of honour or of jewels, that will fall to the lot of one Sancho Mundo, a poor unknown, almost shirtless mariner, that hath more need of both than hath ever crossed the mind of our gracious lady, Doña Isabella, or of her royal consort."

"Sancho, thou art a proof that no man is without his failings, and I fear thou art mercenary. They say all men have their prices; thou seemest clearly to have thine."

"Your Excellency hath not been sailing about the world for nothing, or you could not tell every man his inclinations so easily. I

have ever suspected I was mercenary, and so have accepted all sorts of presents to keep the feeling down. Nothing appeases a mercenary longing like gifts and rewards; and as for price, I strove hard to keep mine as high as possible, lest it should bring me into discredit for a mean and grovelling spirit. Give me a high price, and plenty of gifts, and I can be as disinterested as a mendicant friar."

"I understand thee, Sancho; thou art to be bought, but not to be frightened. In thy opinion a single dobla is too little to be divided between thee and thy friend, the Portuguese. I will make a league with thee on thine own terms; here is another piece of gold; see that thou remainest true to me throughout the voyage."

"Count on me, without scruple, Señor Don Almirante, and with scruples, too, should they interfere. Your Excellency hath not a more disinterested friend in the fleet. I only hope that when the share-list shall be written out, the name of Sancho Mundo may have an honourable place, as will become his fidelity.

And now, your Excellency, go sleep in peace; the Santa Maria shall lie as near to the route to Cathay, as this south-westerly breeze will suffer."

Columbus complied, though he rose once or twice more during the night to ascertain the state of the weather, and that the men did their duties. So long as Sancho remained at the helm he continued faithful to his compact; but, as he went below with his watch at the usual hour, successors were put in his place, who betrayed the original treachery of the other helmsman. When Luis left his hammock, Columbus was already at work, ascertaining the distance that had been run in the course of the night. Catching the inquiring glance of the young man the Admiral observed gravely, and not altogether without melancholy in his manner——

"We have had a good run, though it hath been more northerly than I could have desired. I find that the vessels are thirty leagues farther from Ferro than when the sun set, and thou seest here that I have written four-and-twenty

in the reckoning, that is intended for the eyes of the people. But there hath been great weakness at work this night among the steersmen, if not treachery: they have kept the ship away in a manner to cause her to run a part of the time in a direction nearly parallel to the coast of Europe, so that they have been endeavouring to deceive me on the deck, whilst I have thought it necessary to attempt deceiving them in the cabin. It is painful, Don Luis, to find such deceptions resorted to, or such deceptions necessary, when one is engaged in an enterprise that surpasseth all others ever yet attempted by man, and that, too, with a view to the glory of God, the advantage of the human race, and the especial interests of Spain."

"The holy churchmen, themselves, Don Christopher, are obliged to submit to this evil," answered the careless Luis; "and it does not become us laymen to repine at what they endure. I am told that half the miracles they perform are, in truth, miracles of but a very indifferent quality, the doubts and want of faith

of us hardened sinners rendering such little inventions necessary for the good of our souls."

"That there are false-minded and treacherous churchmen, as well as false-minded and treacherous laymen, Luis, I little doubt," answered the Admiral; "but this cometh of the fall of man, and of his evil nature. There are also righteous and true miracles, that come of the power of God, and which are intended to uphold the faith, and to encourage those who love and honour his holy name. I do not esteem anything that hath yet befallen us to belong very distinctly to this class; nor do I venture to hope that we are to be favoured in this manner by an especial intervention in our behalf; but it exceedeth all the machinations of the devils to persuade me that we shall be deserted while bent on so glorious a design, or that we are not indirectly and secretly led in our voyage by a spirit and knowledge that both come of Divine grace and infinite wisdom."

"This may be so, Don Christopher, so far as you are concerned; though for myself I claim no higher a guide than an angel. An angel's

purity, and I hope I may add, an angel's love, lead me in my blind path across the ocean!"

"So it seemeth to thee, Luis; but thou canst not know that a higher power doth not use the Doña Mercedes as an instrument in this matter. Although no miracle rendereth it apparent to the vulgar, a spirit is placed in my breast, in conducting this enterprise, that I should deem it blasphemy to resist. God be praised, my boy, we are at last quit of the Portuguese, and are fairly on our road! At present all our obstacles must arise from the elements, or from our own fears. It gladdeneth my heart to find that the two Pinzons remain true, and that they keep their caravels close to the Santa Maria, like men bent on maintaining their faith and seeing an end of the adventure."

As Luis was now ready, he and the Admiral left the cabin together. The sun had risen, and the broad expanse of the ocean was glittering with his rays. The wind had freshened, and was gradually getting farther to the south, so that the vessels headed up nearly

to their course; and, there being but little sea, the progress of the fleet was, in proportion, considerable. Every thing appeared propitious; and the first burst of grief, on losing sight of known land, having subsided, the crews were more tranquil, though dread of the future was smothered, like the latent fires of a volcano, rather than extinguished. The aspect of the sea was favourable, offering nothing to view that was unusual to mariners; and, as there is always something grateful in a lively breeze, when unaccompanied with danger, the men were probably encouraged by a state of things to which they were accustomed, and which brought with it cheerfulness and hope. In the course of the day and night, the vessels ran a hundred and eighty miles still farther into the trackless waste of the ocean, without awakening half the apprehensions in the bosoms of the mariners that they had experienced on losing sight of land. Columbus, however, acting on the cautious principle he had adopted, when he laid before his people the result of the twenty-four

hours' work, reduced the distance to about one hundred and fifty.

Tuesday, the 1st of September, brought a still more favourable change of wind. This day, for the first time since quitting the Canaries, the heads of the vessels were laid fairly to the west; and, with the Old World directly behind them, and the unknown ocean in their front, the adventurers proceeded onward with a breeze at south-east. The rate of sailing was about five miles in the hour; compensating for the want of speed, by the steadiness of their progress and by the directness of their course.

The observations that are usually made at sea, when the sun is in the zenith, were over, and Columbus had just announced to his anxious companions that the vessels were gradually setting south, owing to the drift of some invisible current, when a cry from the mast-head announced the proximity of a whale. As the appearance of one of these monsters of the deep breaks the monotony of a sea-life, every one was instantly on the look-out, some leap-

ing into the rigging, and others upon the rails, in order to catch a glimpse of his gambols.

"Dost thou see him, Sancho?" demanded the Admiral of Mundo, the latter being near him at the moment. "To me the water hath no appearance of any such animal's being at hand."

"Your Excellency's eye, Señor Don Almirante, is far truer than that of the babbler's aloft. Sure as this is the Atlantic, and yonder is the foam of the crests of the waves, there is no whale."

"The flukes! the flukes!" shouted a dozen voices at once, pointing to a spot where a dark object arose above the froth of the sea, showing a pointed summit, with short arms extended on each side. "He playeth with his head beneath the water, and the tail uppermost!"

"Alas! alas!" exclaimed the practised Sancho, with the melancholy of a true seaman, "what these inexperienced and hasty brawlers call the fluke of a whale, is nought but the mast of some unhappy ship, that hath

left her bones, with her freight and her people, in the depths of the ocean!"

"Thou art right, Sancho," returned the Admiral. "I now see that thou meanest: it is truly a spar, and doubtless betokeneth a shipwreck."

This fact passed swiftly from mouth to mouth, and the sadness that ever accompanies the evidences of such a disaster, settled on the faces of all the beholders. The pilots alone showed indifference, and they consulted on the expediency of endeavouring to secure the spar, as a resource in time of need; but they abandoned the attempt on account of the agitation of the water, and of the fairness of the wind, the latter being an advantage a true mariner seldom likes to lose.

"There is a warning to us!" exclaimed one of the disaffected, as the Santa Maria sailed past the waving summit of the spar: "God hath sent this sign, to warn us not to venture where he never intended navigators to go!"

"Say rather," replied Sancho, who, having taken the fee, had ever since proved a willing

advocate, "it is an omen of encouragement sent from heaven. Dost thou not see that the part of the mast that is visible resembleth a cross, which holy sign is intended to lead us on, filled with hopes of success?"

"This is true, Sancho," interrupted Columbus. "A cross hath been reared for our edification, as it might be, in the midst of the ocean, and we are to regard it as a proof that providence is with us, in our attempt to carry its blessings to the aid and consolation of the heathen of Asia."

As the resemblance to the holy symbol was far from fanciful, this happy hit of Sancho's was not without its effect. The reader will understand the likeness all the better, when he is told that the upper end of a mast has much of the appearance of a cross, by means of the trussel-trees; and, as often happens, this particular spar was floating nearly perpendicular, owing to some heavy object being fast to its heel, leaving the summit raised some fifteen or twenty feet above the surface of the sea. In a quarter of an hour this last relic of Europe

and of civilization disappeared in the wake of the vessels, gradually diminishing in size and settling towards the water, until its faint outlines vanished in threads, still wearing the well-known shape of the revered symbol of Christianity.

After this little incident, the progress of the vessels was uninterrupted by any event worthy of notice for two days and nights. All this time the wind was favourable, and the adventurers proceeded due west, by compass, which was in fact, however, going a little north of the real point,—a truth that the knowledge of the period had not yet mastered. Between the morning of the 10th September, and the evening of the 13th, the fleet had passed over near ninety leagues of ocean, holding its way in a line but a little deviating from a direct one athwart the great waste of water, and having consequently reached a point as far, if not farther west, than the position of the Azores, then the most westerly land known to European navigators. On the 13th, the currents proved to be adverse, and having a south-easterly set, they had a ten-

dency to cause the ships to sheer southwardly, bringing them, each hour, nearer to the northern margin of the trades.

The Admiral and Luis were at their customary post, on the evening of the 13th, the day last mentioned, as Sancho left the helm, his tour of duty having just ended. Instead of going forward, as usual, among the people, the fellow hesitated, surveyed the poop with a longing eye, and finding it occupied only by the Admiral and his constant companion, he ascended the ladder, as if desirous of making some communication.

"Would'st thou aught with me, Sancho?" demanded the Admiral, waiting for the man to make certain that no one else was on the narrow deck. "Speak freely: thou hast my confidence."

"Señor Don Almirante, your Excellency well knoweth that I am no fresh-water fish, to be frightened at the sight of a shark or a whale, or one that is terrified because a ship headeth west instead of east; and yet do I come to say that this voyage is not altogether without cer-

tain signs and marvels, that it may be well for a mariner to respect, as unusual, if not ominous."

"As thou sayest, Sancho, thou art no driveller to be terrified by the flight of a bird, or at the presage of a drifting spar, and thou awakenest my curiosity to know more. The Señor de Muños is my confidential secretary, and nothing need be hid from him. Speak freely, then, and without further delay. If gold is thy aim, be certain thou shalt have it."

"No, Señor, my news is not worth a maravedi, or it is far beyond the price of gold; such as it is, your Excellency can take it, and think no more of my reward. You know, Señor, that we old mariners will have our thoughts as we stand at the helm, sometimes fancying the smiles and good looks of some hussy ashore, sometimes remembering the flavour of rich fruits and well-savoured mutton; and then, again, for a wonder, bethinking us of our sins."

"Fellow, all this I well know; but it is not matter for an admiral's ear."

"I know not that, Señor; I have known admirals who have relished mutton after a long cruise; ay, and who have bethought them, too, of smiling faces and bright eyes, and who, if they did not, at times, bethink them of their sins, have done what was much worse, help to add to the great account that was heaping up against them. Now, there was——"

"Let me toss this vagabond into the sea at once, Don Christopher," interrupted the impatient Luis, making a forward movement as if to execute the threat, an act which the hand of Columbus arrested; "we shall never hear a tale the right end first, as long as he remaineth in the ship."

"I thank you, my young lord of Llera," answered Sancho, with an ironical smile; "if you are as ready at drowning seamen, as you are at unhorsing Christian knights in the tourney and infidels in the fray, I would rather that another should be master of my baths."

"Thou know'st me, knave! — Thou hast seen me on some earlier voyage."

"A cat may look at a king, Señor Conde; and why not a mariner on his passenger? But spare your threats, and your secret is in safe hands. If we reach Cathay, no one will be ashamed of having made the voyage; and if we miss it, it is little likely that any will go back to relate the precise manner in which your excellency was drowned, or starved to death, or in what other manner you became a saint in Abraham's bosom."

"Enough of this!" said Columbus sternly; "relate what thou hast to say, and see that thou art discreet touching this young noble."

"Señor, your word is law. Well, Don Christopher, it is one of the tricks of us mariners at night, to be watching an old and constant friend, — the north star; and while thus occupied an hour since, I noted that this faithful guide and the compass by which I was steering, told different tales."

"Art certain of this?" demanded the Admiral, with a quickness and emphasis that betrayed the interest he felt in the communication.

"As certain, Señor, as fifty years' looking at the star, and forty years' watching of the compass can make a man. But there is no occasion, your Excellency, to depend on my ignorance, since the star is still where God placed it; and there is your private compass at your elbow—one may be compared with the other."

Columbus had already bethought him of making this comparison; and by the time Sancho ceased speaking, he and Luis were examining the instrument with eager curiosity. The first, and the most natural, impression, was a belief that the needle of the instrument below was defective, or, at least, influenced by some foreign cause; but an attentive observation soon convinced the navigator that the remark of Sancho was true. He was both astonished and concerned to find that the habitual care and professional eye of the fellow had been active, and quick to note a change as unusual as this. It was indeed so common with mariners to compare their compasses with the north star, a luminary that was supposed

never to vary its position in the heavens, as that position related to man, that no experienced seaman, who happened to be at the helm at nightfall, could well overlook the phenomenon.

After repeated observations with his own compasses, of which he kept two—one on the poop, and another in the cabin—and having recourse also to the two instruments in the binnacle, Columbus was compelled to admit to himself that all four varied alike from their usual direction, nearly six degrees. Instead of pointing due north, or, at least, in a direct line towards a point on the horizon immediately beneath the star, they pointed some five or six degrees to the westward of it. This was both a novel and an astounding departure from the laws of nature, as they were then understood, and threatened to render the desired results of the voyage so much the more difficult of attainment, as it at once deprived the adventurers of a sure reliance on the mariner's principal guide, and would render it difficult to sail, with any feeling of certainty

as to the course, in cloudy weather or dark nights. The first thought of the Admiral, on this occasion, however, was to prevent the effect which such a discovery would be likely to produce on men already disposed to anticipate the worst.

"Thou wilt say nothing of this, Sancho?" he observed to the man. "Here is another dobla to add to thy store."

"Excellency, pardon an humble seaman's disobedience, if my hand refuse to open to your gift. This matter toucheth of supernatural means; and, as the devil may have an agency in the miracle, in order to prevent our converting them heathen, of whom you so often speak, I prefer to keep my soul as pure as may be in the matter, since no one knoweth what weapons we may be driven to use, should we come to real blows with the Father of Sin."

"Thou wilt, at least, prove discreet?"

"Trust me for that, Señor Don Almirante. Not a word shall pass my lips about this matter, until I have your Excellency's permission to speak."

Columbus dismissed the man, and then he turned towards Luis, who had been a silent but attentive listener to what had passed.

"You seem disturbed at this departure from the usual laws of the compass, Don Christopher," observed the young man gaily. "To me it would seem better to rely altogether on Providence, which would scarcely lead us out here into the wide Atlantic, on its own errand, and desert us when we most need its aid."

"God implants in the bosom of his servants a desire to advance his ends, but human agents are compelled to employ natural means; and, in order to use such means advantageously, it is necessary to understand them. I look upon this phenomenon as a proof that our voyage is to result in discoveries of unknown magnitude, among which, perhaps, are to be numbered some clue to the mysteries of the needle. The mineral riches of Spain differ, in certain particulars, from the mineral riches of France; for, though some things are common to all lands, others are peculiar to particular countries. We may find regions where the loadstone abounds,

or may, even now, be in the neighbourhood of some island that hath an influence on our compasses that we cannot explain."

"Is it known that islands have ever produced this effect on the needle?"

"It is not, nor do I deem such a circumstance very probable, though all things are possible. We will wait patiently for further proofs that this phenomenon is real and permanent, ere we reason further on a matter that is so difficult to be understood."

The subject was now dropped, though the unusual incident gave the great navigator an uneasy and thoughtful night. He slept little, and often was his eye fastened on the compass that was suspended in his cabin as a "tell-tale," for so seamen term the instrument by which the officer overlooks the course that is steered by the helmsman, even when the latter least suspects his supervision.

Columbus arose sufficiently early to get a view of the star, before its brightness was dimmed by the return of light, and made another deliberate comparison of the position of this

familiar heavenly body with the direction of the needles. The examination proved a slight increase of the variation, and tended to corroborate the observations of the previous night. The result of the reckoning showed that the vessels had run nearly a hundred miles in the course of the last twenty-four hours; and Columbus now believed himself to be about six times that distance west of Ferro, though even the pilots fancied themselves by no means as far.

As Sancho kept his secret, and no other eye among the helmsmen was as vigilant, the important circumstance, as yet, escaped general attention. It was only at night, indeed, that the variation could be observed by means of the polar star, and it was yet so slight, that no one but a very experienced and quick-eyed mariner would be apt to note it. The whole of the day and night of the 14th consequently passed without the crew's taking the alarm, and this so much the more as the wind had fallen, and the vessels were only some sixty miles farther west than when they commenced.

Still Columbus noted the difference, slight as was the change; ascertaining, with the precision of an experienced and able navigator, that the needle was gradually varying more and more to the westward, though it was by steps that were nearly imperceptible.

CHAPTER VIII.

On thy unaltering blaze
The half-wreck'd mariner, his compass lost,
Fixes his steady gaze,
And steers, undoubting, to the friendly coast;
And they who stray in perilous wastes, by night,
Are glad when thou dost shine to guide their footsteps right.

Hymn to the North Star.

THE following day was Saturday, the 15th, when the little fleet was ten days from Gomera, or it was the sixth morning since the adventurers had lost sight of the land. The last week had been one of melancholy forebodings, though habit was beginning to assert its influence, and the men manifested openly less uneasiness than they had done in the three or four previous days. Their apprehensions were getting to be dormant for want of any exciting and apparent

stimulus; though they existed as latent impulses, in readiness to be roused at the occurrence of any untoward event. The wind continued fair, though light; the whole twenty-four hours' work showing considerably less than a hundred miles as the true progress west. All this time Columbus kept his attention fastened on the needles; and he perceived that, as the vessels slowly made their westing, the magnets pointed more and more, though by scarcely palpable changes, in the same direction.

The Admiral and Luis by this time had fallen into such habits of close communication, that they usually rose and slept at the same time. Though far too ignorant of the hazards he ran to feel uneasiness, and constitutionally, as well as morally, superior to idle alarms, the young man had got to feel a sort of sportsman's excitement in the result; and, by this time, had not Mercedes existed, he would have been as reluctant to return without seeing Cathay as Columbus himself. They conversed together of their progress and their hopes with-

out ceasing; and Luis took so much interest in his situation as to begin to learn how to discriminate in matters that might be supposed to affect its duration and ends.

On the night of the Saturday just mentioned, Columbus and his reputed secretary were alone on the poop, conversing, as usual, on the signs of the times, and of the events of the day.

"The Niña had something to say to you last evening, Don Christopher," observed the young man. "I was occupied in the cabin with my journal, and had no opportunity of knowing what passed."

"Her people had seen a bird or two, that are thought never to go far from the land. It is possible that islands are at no great distance, for man hath nowhere passed over any very great extent of sea without meeting with them. We cannot, however, waste the time necessary for a search, since the glory and profit of ascertaining the situation of a group of islands would be but a poor compensation for the loss of a continent."

"Do you still remark those unaccountable changes in the needles, Señor?"

"In this respect there is no change, except that which goeth to corroborate the phenomenon. My chief apprehension is of the effect on the people, when the circumstance shall be known."

"Are there no means to persuade them that the needle pointeth thus west, as a sign Providence willeth they should pursue that course, by persevering in the voyage?"

"This might do, Luis," answered the Admiral, smiling, "had not fear so sharpened their wits, that their first question would be an inquiry why Providence should deprive us of the *means* of knowing whither we are travelling, when it so much wisheth us to go in any particular direction."

A cry from the watch on deck arrested the discourse; while a sudden brightness broke on the night, illuminating the vessels and the ocean, as if a thousand lamps were shedding their brilliancy upon the surrounding portion of the sphere. A ball of fire was glancing

athwart the heavens, and seemed to fall into the sea, at the distance of a few leagues, or at the limits of the visible horizon. Its disappearance was followed by a gloom as profound as the extraordinary and fleeting light had been brilliant. This was only the passage of a meteor; but it was such a meteor as men do not see more than once in their lives — if it is seen as often; and the superstitious mariners did not fail to note the incident among the extraordinary omens that accompanied the voyage; some auguring good, and others evil, from the event.

"By St. Iago!" exclaimed Luis, as soon as the light had vanished, "Señor Don Christopher, this voyage of ours doth not seem fated to pass away unheeded by the elements and other notable powers! Whether these portents speak in our favour or not, they speak us anything but men engaged in an every-day occupation."

"Thus it is with the human mind!" returned Columbus. "Let but its owner pass beyond the limits of his ordinary habits and

duties, and he sees marvels in the most simple changes of the weather—in a flash of lightning — a blast of air — or the passage of a meteor; little heeding that these miracles exist in his own consciousness, and have no connexion with the every-day laws of nature. These sights are by no means uncommon, especially in low latitudes; and they augur neither for nor against our enterprise."

"Except, Señor Almirante, as they may beset the spirits, and haunt the imaginations of the men. Sancho telleth me that a brooding discontent is growing among them; and that while they seem so tranquil their disrelish of the voyage is hourly getting to be more and more decided."

Notwithstanding this opinion of the Admiral, and some pains that he afterwards took to explain the phenomenon to the people on deck, the passage of the meteor had, indeed, not only produced a deep impression on them, but its history went from watch to watch, and was the subject of earnest discourse throughout the night. But the incident produced no open

manifestation of discontent; a few deeming it a propitious omen, though most secretly considered it an admonition from heaven against any impious attempts to pry into those mysteries of nature, that, according to their notions, God in his providence had not seen fit to reveal to man.

All this time the vessels were making a steady progress towards the west. The wind had often varied both in force and direction, but never in a manner to compel the ships to shorten sail, or to deviate from what the Admiral believed to be the proper course. They supposed themselves to be steering due west, but, owing to the variation, were in fact now holding a west-and-by-south course, and were gradually getting nearer to the trades; a movement in which they had also been materially aided by the force of the currents. In the course of the 15th and 16th of the month, the fleet had got about two hundred miles farther from Europe; Columbus taking the usual precaution to lessen the distance in the public reckoning. The latter day was a Sunday; and

the religious offices, which were then seldom neglected in a Christian ship, produced a deep and sublime effect on the feelings of the adventurers. Hitherto the weather had partaken of the usual character of the season, and a few clouds, with a slight drizzling rain, had relieved the heat; but these soon passed away, and were succeeded by a soft south-east wind, that seemed to come charged with the fragrance of the land. The men united in the evening chants under these propitious circumstances: the vessels drawing near each other, as if it might be to form one temple in honour of God amid the vast solitudes of an ocean that had seldom, if ever, been whitened by a sail. Cheerfulness and hope succeeded to this act of devotion, and both were speedily heightened by a cry from the look-out aloft, who pointed ahead and to leeward, as if he beheld some object of peculiar interest in that quarter. The helms were varied a little; and in a few minutes the vessels entered into a field of sea-weed, that covered the ocean for miles. This sign of the vicinity of land was received by the mariners with a

shout; and the very beings who had so shortly before been balancing on the verge of despair, now became elate with joy.

These weeds were indeed of a character to awaken hope in the bosom of the most experienced mariner. Although some had lost their freshness, a great proportion of them were still green, and had the appearance of having been quite recently separated from their parent rocks, or the earth that had nourished them. No doubt was now entertained, even by the pilots, of the vicinity of land. Tunny-fish were also seen in numbers, and the people of the Niña were sufficiently fortunate to strike one. The seamen embraced each other with tears in their eyes; and many a hand was squeezed in friendly congratulation, that the previous day would have been withheld in surly misanthropy.

"And do you partake of all this hope, Don Christopher?" demanded Luis; "are we really to expect the Indies as a consequence of these marine plants, or is the expectation idle?"

"The people deceive themselves in supposing our voyage near an end. Cathay must yet be very distant from us. We have come but three hundred and sixty leagues since losing sight of Ferro; which, according to my computations, cannot be much more than a third of our journey. Aristotle mentioneth that certain vessels of Cadiz were forced westward by heavy gales, until they reached a sea covered with weeds, a spot where the tunny-fish abounded. This is the fish, thou must know, Luis, that the ancients fancied could see better with the right eye than with the left; because it hath been noted that, in passing the Bosphorus, they ever take the right shore in proceeding towards the Euxine, and the left in returning——"

"By St. Francis! there can be no wonder if creatures so one-sided in their vision, should have strayed thus far from home," interrupted the light-hearted Luis, laughing. "Doth Aristotle, or the other ancients, tell us how they regarded beauty; or whether their no-

tions of justice were like those of the magistrate who hath been fee'd by both parties?"

"Aristotle speaketh only of the presence of the fish in the weedy ocean, as we see them before us. The mariners of Cadiz fancied themselves in the neighbourhood of sunken islands; and, the wind permitting, made the best of their way back to their own shores. This place, in my judgment, we have now reached; but I expect to meet with no land, unless, indeed, we may happen to fall in with some island that lieth off here in the ocean, as a sort of beacon between the shore of Europe and that of Asia. Doubtless land is not distant, whence these weeds have drifted; but I attach little importance to its sight or discovery. Cathay is my aim, Don Luis; and I am a searcher for continents, not islands."

It is now known, that while Columbus was right in his expectations of not finding a continent so early, he was mistaken in supposing land to lie anywhere in that vicinity. Whether these weeds are collected by the course of the currents, or whether they rise from

the bottom, torn from their beds by the action of the water, is not yet absolutely ascertained; though the latter is the most common opinion, extensive shoals existing in this quarter of the ocean. Under the latter supposition, the mariners of Cadiz were nearer the truth than is first apparent; a sunken island having all the characteristics of a shoal, but those which may be supposed to be connected with the mode of formation.

No land was seen. The vessels continued their progress at a rate but little varying from five miles the hour; shoving aside the weeds, which at times accumulated in masses under their bows, but which could offer no serious obstacle to their progress. As for the Admiral, so lofty were his views, so steady his opinions concerning the great geographical problem he was about to solve, and so determined his resolution to persevere to the end, that he rather hoped to miss than to fall in with the islands that he fancied could be at no great distance. The day and night carried the vessels rather more than one hundred miles to

the westward, placing the fleet not far from midway between the meridians that bounded the extreme western and eastern margins of the two continents, though still much nearer to Africa than to America, following the parallel of latitude on which it was sailing. As the wind continued steady, and the sea was as smooth as a river, the three vessels kept close together; the Pinta, the swiftest craft, reducing her canvass for that purpose. During the afternoon's watch of the day that succeeded that of the meeting with the weeds, which was Monday the 17th September, or the eighth day after losing sight of Ferro, Martin Alonzo Pinzon hailed the Santa Maria, and acquainted the pilot on deck of his intention to get the amplitude of the sun as soon as the luminary should be low enough, with a view to ascertain how far his needles retained their virtue. This observation, one of no unusual occurrence among mariners, it was thought had better be made in all the caravels simultaneously, that any error of one might be corrected by the greater accuracy of the rest.

Columbus and Luis were in a profound sleep in their cots, taking their siestas, when the former was awakened by such a shake of the shoulder as seamen are wont to give, and are content to receive. It never required more than a minute to arouse the great navigator from his deepest slumbers to the fullest possession of his faculties, and he was awake in an instant.

"Señor Don Almirante," said Sancho, who was the intruder, "it is time to be stirring: all the pilots are on deck in readiness to measure the amplitude of the sun as soon as the heavenly bodies are in their right places. The west is already beginning to look like a dying dolphin, and ere many minutes it will be gilded like the helmet of a Moorish sultan."

"An amplitude measured!" exclaimed Columbus, quitting his cot on the instant. "This is news indeed! Now we may look for such a stir among the people as hath not been witnessed since we left Cadiz."

"So it hath appeared to me, your Excellency, for the mariner hath some such faith in

the needle as the Churchman bestoweth on the goodness of the Son of God. The people are in a happy humour at this moment, but the saints only know what is to come!"

The Admiral awoke Luis, and in five minutes both were at their customary station on the poop. Columbus had gained so high a reputation for skill in navigation,—his judgment invariably proving right, even when opposed to those of all the pilots in the fleet,—that the latter were not sorry to perceive he had no intention to take an instrument in hand, but seemed disposed to leave the issue to their own skill and practice. The sun slowly settled, the proper time was watched, and then these rude mariners set about their task, in the mode that was practised in their time. Martin Alonzo Pinzon, the most ready and best-taught of them all, was soonest through with his task. From his lofty stand the Admiral could overlook the deck of the Pinta, which vessel was sailing but a hundred yards from the Santa Maria; and it was not long before he observed her commander moving from one compass to

another, in the manner of a man who was disturbed. Another minute or two elapsed, when the skiff of the caravel was launched; a sign was made for the Admiral's vessel to shorten sail, and Martin Alonzo was soon forcing his way through the weeds that still covered the surface of the ocean towards the Santa Maria. As he gained the deck of the latter ship on one of her sides, his kinsman, Vicente Yañez, the commander of the Niña, did the same thing on the other. In the next instant both were at the side of the great navigator, on the poop; whither they had been followed by Sancho Ruiz and Bartolemeo Roldan, the two pilots of the Admiral.

"What meaneth this haste, good Martin Alonzo?" calmly asked Columbus: "thou and thy brother, Vicente Yañez, and these honest pilots, hurry towards me as if ye had cheering tidings from Cathay."

"God only knoweth, Señor Almirante, if any of us are ever to be permitted to see that distant land, or any shore that is only to be reached by mariners through the aid of a nee-

dle," answered the elder Pinzon, with a haste that almost rendered him breathless. "Here have we all been at the comparison of the instruments; and we find them, without a single exception, varying from the true north by at least a full point!"

"That would be a marvel truly! Ye have made some oversight in your observations, or have been heedless in the estimates."

"Not so, noble Admiral," put in Vicente Yañez, to sustain his brother. "Even the magnets are becoming false to us; and, as I mentioned the circumstance to the oldest steersman of my craft, he assures me that the North Star did not tally with his instrument throughout the night!"

"Others say the same here," added Ruiz: "nay, some are ready to swear that the wonder hath been noted ever since we entered the sea of weeds!"

"This may be so, Señores," answered Columbus, with an undisturbed mien, "and yet no evil follow. We all know that the heavenly bodies have their revolutions, some of which no

doubt are irregular, while others are more in conformity with certain settled rules. Thus it is with the sun himself, which passeth once round the earth in the short space of twenty-four hours; while no doubt he hath other, and more subtle movements, that are unknown to us, on account of the exceeding distance at which he is placed in the heavens. Many astronomers have thought that they have been able to detect these variations, spots having been seen on the disk of the orb at times, which have disappeared, as if hid behind the body of the luminary. I think it will be found that the North Star hath made some slight deviation in its position, and that it will continue thus to move for some short period; after which, no doubt, it will be found returning to its customary position, when it will be seen that its temporary eccentricity hath in no manner disturbed its usual harmony with the needles. Note the star well throughout the night, and in the morning let the amplitude be again taken, when I think the truth of my conjecture will be proved by the regularity of the move-

ment of the heavenly body. So far from being discouraged by this sign, we ought rather to rejoice that we have made a discovery, which of itself will entitle the expedition to the credit of having added materially to the stores of science!"

The pilots were fain to be satisfied with this solution of their doubts, in the absence of any other means of accounting for them. They remained long on the poop discoursing of the strange occurrence; and as men, even in their blindest moods, usually reason themselves into either tranquillity or apprehension, they fortunately succeeded in doing the first on this occasion. With the men there was more difficulty; for, when it became known to the crews of the three vessels that the needles had begun to deviate from their usual direction, a feeling akin to despair seized on them, almost without exception. Here Sancho was of material service. When the panic was at its height, and the people were on the point of presenting themselves to the Admiral, with a demand that the heads of the caravels should be immediate-

ly turned towards the north-east, he interposed with his knowledge and influence to calm the tumult. The first means this trusty follower had recourse to, in order to bring his shipmates back to reason, was to swear, without reservation, that he had frequently known the needle and the North Star to vary, having witnessed the fact with his own eyes on twenty previous occasions, and no harm to come of it. He invited the elder and more experienced seamen to make an accurate observation of the difference which already existed, which was quite a point of the compass, and then to see in the morning if this difference had not increased in the same direction.

"This," he continued, "will be a certain sign, my friends, that the star is in motion, since we can all see that the compasses are just where they have been ever since we left Palos de Moguer. When one of two things is in motion, and it is certain which stands still, there can be no great difficulty in saying which is the uneasy one. Now, look thou here, Martin Martinez," — who was one of the most

factious of the disaffected, — "words are of little use when men can prove their meaning by experiments like this. Thou seest two balls of spun-yarn on this windlass; well, it is wanted to be known which of them remains there, and which is taken away. I remove the smallest ball, thou perceivest, and the largest remains; from which it followeth, as only one can remain, and that one is the larger ball, why the smaller must be taken away. I hold no man fit to steer a caravel by needle or by star, who will deny a thing that is proven as plainly and as simply as this!"

Martin Martinez, though a singularly disaffected man, was no logician; and, Sancho's oaths backing his demonstrations to the letter, his party soon became the most numerous. As there is nothing so encouraging to the dull-minded and discontented mutineer as to perceive that he is of the strongest side, so is there nothing so discouraging as to find himself in the minority; and Sancho so far prevailed as to bring most of his fellows round to a belief in

the expediency of waiting to ascertain the state of things in the morning, before they committed themselves by any act of rashness.

"Thou hast done well, Sancho," said Columbus, an hour later, when the mariner came secretly to make his nightly report of the state of feeling among the people. "Thou hast done well in all but these oaths, taken to prove that thou hast witnessed this phenomenon before. Much as I have navigated the earth, and careful as have been my observations, and ample as have been my means, never before have I known the needle to vary from its direction towards the North Star; and I think that which hath escaped my notice would not be apt to attract thine."

"You do me injustice, Señor Don Almirante, and have inflicted a wound touching my honesty, that a dobla only can cure —"

"Thou knowest, Sancho, that no one felt more alarm when the deviation of the needle was first noted than thyself. So great, in

sooth, was thy apprehension, that thou even refusedst to receive gold,—a weakness of which thou art usually exceedingly innocent."

"When the deviation was first noted, your Excellency, this was true enough; for, not to attempt to mislead one who hath more penetration than befalleth ordinary men, I did fancy that our hopes of ever seeing Spain or St. Clara de Moguer again were so trifling as to make it of no great consequence who was admiral, and who a simple helmsman."

"And yet thou wouldst now brazen it out, and deny thy terror! Didst thou not swear to thy fellows that thou hadst often seen this deviation before; ay, even on as many as twenty occasions?"

"Well, Excellency, this is a proof that a cavalier may make a very capital viceroy and admiral, and know all about Cathay, without having the clearest notions of history! I told my shipmates, Don Christopher, that I had noted these changes before this night; and if tied to the stake to be burnt as a martyr, as I sometimes think will one day be the fate of all of

us superfluously honest men, I would call on yourself, Señor Almirante, as the witness of the truth of what I had sworn to."

"Thou would'st, then, summon a most unfortunate witness, Sancho; since I neither practise false oaths myself, nor encourage their use in others."

"Don Luis de Bobadilla y Pedro de Muños, here, would then be my reliance," said the imperturbable Sancho; "for proof a man hath a right to, when wrongfully accused, and proof I will have. Your Excellency will please to remember that it was on the night of Saturday the 15th that I first notified your worship of this very change, and that we are now at the night of Monday the 17th. I swore to twenty times noting this phenomenon, as it is called, in those eight-and-forty hours, when it would have been nearer the truth had I said two hundred times. Santa Maria! I did nothing but note it for the first few hours!"

"Go to, Sancho, thy conscience hath its latitude as well as its longitude; but thou hast thy uses. Now that thou understandest the

reason of the variation, however, thou wilt encourage thy fellows as well as keep up thy spirits."

"I make no question that it is all as your Excellency sayeth about the star's travelling," returned Sancho, "and it hath crossed my mind that it is possible we are nearer Cathay than we have thought; this movement being made by some evil-disposed spirits on purpose to make us lose the way."

"Go to thy hammock, knave, and bethink thee of thy sins; leaving the reasons of these mysteries to those who are better taught. There is thy dobla, and see that thou art discreet."

In the morning every being in the three caravels waited impatiently for the results of the new observations. As the wind continued favourable, though far from fresh, and a current was found setting to the westward, the vessels had made, in the course of twenty-four hours, more than a hundred and fifty miles, which rendered the increase in the variation perceptible; thus corroborating a prophecy of

Columbus, that had been ventured on previous observation. So easily are the ignorant the dupes of the plausible, that this solution temporarily satisfied all doubts; and it was generally believed that the star had moved, while the needle remained true.

How far Columbus was misled by his own logic in this affair, is still a matter of doubt. That he resorted to deceptions which might be considered innocent, in order to keep up the courage of his companions, is seen in the fact of the false or public reckoning; but there is no proof that this was one of the instances in which he had recourse to such means. No person of any science believed, even when the variation of the compass was unknown, that the needle pointed necessarily to the polar star; the coincidence in the direction of the magnetic needle and the position of the heavenly body, being thought accidental; and there is nothing extravagant in supposing that the Admiral, who had the instrument in his possession, and was able to ascertain that none of its virtue was visibly

lost, while he could only reason from supposed analogy concerning the evolutions of the star, should imagine that a friend he had ever found so faithful, had now deserted him, leaving him disposed to throw the whole mystery of the phenomenon on the more distant dwellers in space. Two opinions have been ventured concerning the belief of the celebrated navigator in the theory he advanced on this occasion; the one affirming, and the other denying, his good faith in urging the doctrine he had laid down. Those who assert the latter, however, would seem to reason a little loosely themselves; their argument mainly resting on the improbability of a man like Columbus uttering so gross a scientific error, at a time when science itself knew no more of the existence of the phenomenon than is known to-day of its cause. Still it is possible that the Admiral may not have had any settled notions on the subject, even while he was half inclined to hope his explanation was correct; for it is certain, that in the midst of the astronomical and geographical ignorance of his age, this extra-

ordinary man had many accurate and sublime glimpses of truths that were still in embryo as respected their developement and demonstration by the lights of precise and inductive reasoning.

Fortunately, if the light brought with it the means of ascertaining with certainty the variation of the needle, it also brought the means of perceiving that the sea was still covered with weeds, and other signs that were thought to be encouraging as connected with the vicinity of land. The current being now in the same direction as the wind, the surface of the ocean was literally as smooth as that of an inland sheet of water, and the vessels were enabled to sail, without danger, within a few fathoms of each other.

"This weed, Señor Almirante," called out the elder Pinzon, "hath the appearance of that which groweth on the banks of streams, and I doubt that we are near to the mouth of some exceeding great river."

"This may be so," returned Columbus; "than which there can be no more certain

sign than may be found in the taste of the water. Let a bucket be drawn, that we may know."

While Pepe was busied in executing this order, waiting until the vessel had passed through a large body of weeds for that purpose, the quick eye of the Admiral detected a crab struggling on the surface of the fresh-looking plants; and he called to the helmsman in sufficient season to enable him so far to vary his course as to allow the animal to be taken.

"Here is a most precious prize, good Martin Alonzo," said Columbus, holding the crab between a finger and thumb, that the other might see it. "These animals are never known to go farther than some eighty leagues from the land; and see, Señor, yonder is one of the white tropic birds, which, it is said, never sleep on the water! Truly, God favoureth us; and what rendereth all these tokens more grateful, is the circumstance of their coming from the west,—the hidden, unknown, mysterious west!"

A common shout burst from the crews at

the appearance of these signs; and again the beings, who lately had been on the verge of despair, were buoyed up with hope, and ready to see propitious omens in even the most common occurrences of the ocean. All the vessels had hauled up buckets of water, and fifty mouths were immediately wet with the brine; and so general was the infatuation, that every man declared the sea far less salt than usual. So complete, indeed, was the delusion created by these cheerful expectations, and so thoroughly had all concern in connection with the moving star been removed by the sophism of Sancho, that even Columbus, habitually so wary, so reasoning, so calm, amid his loftiest views, yielded to his native enthusiasm, and fancied that he was about to discover some vast island placed midway between Asia and Europe; an honour not to be despised, though it fell so far short of his higher expectations.

"Truly, friend Martin Alonzo," he said, "this water seemeth to have less of the savour of the sea than is customary at a distance from the outlet of large rivers!"

"My palate telleth the same tale, Señor Almirante. As a further sign, the Niña hath struck another tunny, and her people are at this moment hoisting it in."

Shout succeeded shout, as each new encouraging proof appeared; and the Admiral, yielding to the ardour of the crews, ordered sail to be pressed on all the vessels, that each might endeavour to outstrip the others, in the hope of being the first to discover the expected island. This strife soon separated the caravels, the Pinta easily outsailing the other two, while the Santa Maria and the Niña came on more slowly in her rear. All was gaiety and mirth the livelong day on board those isolated vessels, that, unknown to those they held, were navigating the middle of the Atlantic, with horizon extending beyond horizon, without change in the watery boundary, as circle would form without circle on the same element, were a vast mass of solid matter suddenly dropped into the sea.

CHAPTER IX.

The sails were fill'd, and fair the light winds blew,
As glad to waft him from his native home;
And fast the white rocks faded from his view,
And soon were lost in circumambient foam:
And then, it may be, of his wish to roam
Repented he, but in his bosom slept
The silent thought; nor from his lips did come
One word of wail, whilst others sate and wept,
And to the reckless gales unmanly moaning kept.

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.

As night drew near, the Pinta shortened sail, permitting her consorts to close. All eyes now turned anxiously to the west, where it was hoped that land might at any moment appear. The last tint, however, vanished from the horizon, and darkness enveloped the ocean without bringing any material change. The wind still blew a pleasant breeze from the south-east, and the surface of the ocean offered little more

inequality than is usually met on the bosoms of large rivers. The compasses showed a slightly increasing deviation from their old coincidence with the polar star, and no one doubted any longer that the fault was in the heavenly body. All this time the vessels were getting to the southward, steering in fact west by south, when they thought they were steering west: a circumstance that alone prevented Columbus from first reaching the coast of Georgia, or that of the Carolinas; since, had he missed the Bermudas, the current of the Gulf Stream meeting him on his weather bow, he would have infallibly been set well to the northward as he neared the continent.

The night passed as usual, and at noon of the 17th, or at the termination of the nautical day, the fleet had left another long tract of ocean between it and the old world. The weeds were disappearing, and with them the tunny-fish, which were, in truth, feeding on the products of shoals that mounted several thousands of feet nearer to the surface of the water than was the case with the general bed

of the Atlantic. The vessels usually kept near each other at noon, in order to compare their observations; but the Pinta, which — like a swift steed—was with difficulty restrained, shot ahead, until the middle of the afternoon, when, as usual, she lay-by for the Admiral to close. As the Santa Maria came sweeping on, the elder Pinzon stood, cap in hand, ready to speak her; waiting only for her to come within sound of his voice.

"God increaseth the signs of land and the motives of encouragement, Señor Don Christopher," he called out cheerfully, while the Pinta filled her sails in order to keep way with the Admiral. "We have seen large flights of birds ahead; and the clouds at the north look heavy and dense, as if hovering over some island or continent in that quarter."

"Thou art a welcome messenger, worthy Martin Alonzo; though I wish thee to remember that the most I expect to meet with in this longitude is some cluster of pleasant islands, Asia being yet several days' sail more distant. As the night approacheth thou wilt see thy

clouds take still more of the form of the land, and I doubt that groups may be found on each side of us; but our high destination is Cathay, and men with such an object before them may not turn aside for any lesser errand."

"Have I your leave, noble Admiral, to push ahead in the Pinta, that our eyes may first be greeted with the grateful sight of Asia? I nothing doubt of seeing it ere morning."

"Go, of God's sake, good pilot, if thou thinkest this; though I warn thee that no continent can yet meet thine eyes. Nevertheless, as any land in these distant and unknown seas must be a discovery, and bring credit on Castile as well as on ourselves, he who first perceiveth it will merit the reward. Thou, or any one else, hath my full permission to discover islands, or continents, in thousands."

The people laughed at this sally, for the light-hearted are easily excited to mirth; and then the Pinta shot ahead. As the sun set, she was seen again lying-to for her companions, a dark speck on the rainbow colours of the glorious sky. The horizon at the north presented masses

of clouds, in which it was not difficult to fancy the summits of ragged mountains, receding valleys, with headlands and promontories, foreshortened by distance.

The following day the wind baffled, for the first time since encountering the trades; and the clouds collected overhead, dispersing drizzling showers on the navigators. The vessels now lay near each other, and conversation flew from one to the other—boats passing and repassing constantly.

"I have come, Señor Almirante," said the elder Pinzon, as he reached the deck of the Santa Maria, "at the united request of my people, to beg that we may steer to the north in quest of land, islands, and continent, that no doubt lie there; and thus crown this great enterprise with the glory that is due to our illustrious sovereigns and your own forethought."

"The wish is just, good Martin Alonzo, and fairly expressed; but it may not be granted. That we should make creditable discoveries by thus steering, is highly probable; but in so

doing we should fall far short of our aim. Cathay and the Great Khan still lie west; and we are here, not to add another group, like the Canaries or the Azores, to the knowledge of man, but to complete the circle of the earth, and to open the way for the setting up of the cross in the regions that have so long been the property of infidels."

"Hast thou nothing to say, Señor de Muños, in support of our petition? Thou hast favour with his Excellency, and may prevail on him to grant us this small behest."

"To tell thee the truth, good Martin Alonzo," answered Luis, with more of the indifference of manner that might have been expected from the grandee to the pilot, than the respect that would become the secretary to the second person of the expedition,—"to tell thee truth, good Martin Alonzo, my heart is so set on the conversion of the Great Khan, that I wish not to turn either to the right or left until that glorious achievement be sufficiently secure. I have observed that Satan effecteth little against those who keep in the direct path, while his

success with those who turn aside is so material as to people his dominions with errants."

"Is there no hope, noble Admiral? and must we quit all these cheering signs, without endeavouring to trace them to some advantageous conclusion?"

"I see no better course, worthy friend. This rain indicateth land; also this calm; and here is a visiter that denoteth more than either—yonder, in the direction of thy Pinta, where it seemeth disposed to rest its wings."

Pinzon and all near him turned, and to their common delight and astonishment they saw a pelican, with extended wings that spread for ten feet, sailing a few fathoms above the sea, and apparently aiming at the vessel named. The adventurous bird, however, as if disdaining to visit one of inferior rank, passed the Pinta, and, sweeping up grandly towards the Admiral, alighted on a yard of the Santa Maria.

"If this be not a certain sign of the vicinity of land," said Columbus gravely, "it is what is far better, a sure omen that God is with us.

He is sending these encouraging calls to confirm us in our intention to serve him and to persevere to the end. Never before, Martin Alonzo, have I seen a bird of this species a day's sail from the shore!"

"Such is my experience too, noble Admiral; and, with you, I look upon this visit as a most propitious omen. May it not be a hint to turn aside, and to look farther in this quarter?"

"I accept it not as such, but rather as a motive to proceed. At our return from the Indies we may examine this part of the ocean with greater scrutiny; though I shall think nought accomplished until India be fairly reached, and India is still hundreds of leagues distant. As the time is favourable, however, we will call together our pilots, and see how each man placeth his vessel on the chart."

At this suggestion all the navigators assembled on board the Santa Maria, and each man made his calculations, sticking a pin in the rude chart—rude as to accuracy, but beautiful as to execution—that the Admiral, with the lights he then possessed, had made of the

Atlantic Ocean. Vicente Yañez, and his companions of the Niña, placed their pin most in advance, after measuring off four hundred and forty marine leagues from Gomera. Martin Alonzo varied a little from this, setting his pin some twenty leagues farther east. When it was the turn of Columbus, he stuck a pin twenty leagues still short of that of Martin Alonzo; his companions having, to all appearance, like less skilful calculators, thus much advanced ahead of their true distance. It was then determined what was to be stated to the crews, and the pilots returned to their respective vessels.

It would seem that Columbus really believed he was then passing between islands; and his historian, Las Casas, affirms that he was actually right in his conjecture: but if islands ever existed in that part of the ocean, they have long since disappeared; a phenomenon which, while it is not impossible, can scarcely be deemed probable. It is said that breakers have been seen, even within the present century, in this vicinity; and it is not unlikely that ex-

tensive banks do exist, though Columbus found no bottom with two hundred fathoms of line. The great collection of weeds is a fact authenticated by some of the oldest records of human investigations, and is most probably owing to some effect of the currents which has a tendency to bring about such an end; while the birds must be considered as stragglers lured from their usual haunts by the food that would be apt to be collected by the union of weeds and fish. Aquatic birds can always rest on the water; and the animal that can wing its way through the air at the rate of thirty or even fifty miles the hour, needs only sufficient strength, to cross the entire Atlantic in four days and nights.

Notwithstanding all these cheering signs, the different crews soon began to feel again the weight of a renewed despondency. Sancho, who was in constant but secret communication with the Admiral, kept the latter properly advised of the state of the people, and reported that more murmurs than usual prevailed; the men having passed again, by the suddenness of

the reaction, from the most elastic hope, nearly to the verge of despair. This fact was told Columbus just at sunset on the evening of the 20th, or on that of the eleventh day after the fleet lost sight of land, and while the seaman was affecting to be busy on the poop, where he made most of his communications.

"They complain, your Excellency," continued Sancho, "of the smoothness of the water; and they say that when the winds blow at all in these seas, they come only from the eastward, having no power to blow from any other quarter. The calms, they think, prove that we are getting into a part of the ocean where there is no wind; and the east winds, they fancy, are sent by Providence to drive those there who have displeased Heaven by a curiosity that it was never intended that any who wear beards should possess."

"Do thou encourage them, Sancho, by reminding the poor fellows that calms prevail at times in all seas; and, as for the east winds, is it not well known that they blow from off the African shores, in low latitudes, at all seasons

of the year, following the sun in his daily track around the earth? I trust thou hast none of this silly apprehension."

"I endeavour to keep a stout heart, Señor Don Almirante, having no one before me to disgrace, and leaving no one behind me to mourn over my loss. Still, I should like to hear a little about the riches of those distant lands, as I find the thoughts of their gold and precious stones have a sort of religious charm over my weakness when I begin to muse upon Moguer and its good cheer."

"Go to, knave, thy appetite for money is insatiable: take yet another dobla, and as thou gazest on it thou may'st fancy what thou wilt of the coin of the Great Khan; resting certain that so great a monarch is not without gold, any more than he is probably without the disposition to part with it when there is occasion."

Sancho received his fee, and left the poop to Columbus and our hero.

"These ups and downs among the knaves," said Luis, impatiently, "were best quelled,

Señor, by an application of the flat of the sword, or, at need, of its edge."

"This may not be, my young friend, without at least far more occasion than yet existeth for the severity. Think not that I have passed so many years of my life in soliciting the means to effect so great a purpose, and have got thus far on my way in unknown seas, with a disposition to be easily turned aside from my purpose. But God hath not created all alike; neither hath he afforded equal chances for knowledge to the peasant and the noble. I have vexed my spirit too often with arguments on this very subject, with the great and learned, not to bear a little with the ignorance of the vulgar. Fancy how much fear would have quickened the wits of the sages of Salamanca, had our discussion been held in the middle of the Atlantic, where man never had been, and whence no eyes but those of logic and science could discover a safe passage."

"This is most true, Señor Almirante; and yet methinks the knights that were of your antago-

nists should not have been wholly unmanned by fear. What danger have we here? this is the wide ocean, it is true; and we are no doubt distant some hundreds of leagues from the known islands, but we are not the less safe. By San Pedro! I have seen more lives lost in a single onset of the Moors than these caravels could hold in bodies, and blood enough spilt to float them!"

"The dangers our people dread may be less turbulent than those of a Moorish fray, Don Luis, but they are not the less terrible. Where is the spring that is to furnish water to the parched lip when our stores shall fail; and where the field to give us its bread and nourishment? It is a fearful thing to be brought down to the dregs of life by the failure of food and water, on the surface of the wide ocean; dying by inches, often without the consolations of the church, and ever without Christian sepulture. These are the fancies of the seaman, and he is only to be driven from them violently when duty demands extreme remedies for his disease."

"To me it seemeth, Don Christopher, that it will be time to reason thus when our casks are drained and the last biscuit is broken. Until then I ask leave of your Excellency to apply the necessary logic to the *outside* of the heads of these varlets, instead of their insides, of which I must question the capacity to hold any good."

Columbus too well understood the hot nature of the young noble to make a serious reply; and they both stood some time leaning against the mizen-mast, watching the scene before them, and musing on the chances of their situation. It was night, and the figures of the watch on the deck beneath were visible only by a light that rendered it difficult to distinguish countenances. The men were grouped; and it was evident by the low but eager tones in which they conversed that they discussed matters connected with the calm and the risks they ran. The outlines of the Pinta and Niña were visible beneath a firmament that was studded with brilliants, their lazy sails hanging in festoons, like the drapery of curtains; and their

black hulls were as stationary as if they both lay moored in one of the rivers of Spain. It was a bland and gentle night; but the immensity of the solitude, the deep calm of the slumbering ocean, and even the occasional creaking of a spar, by recalling to the mind the actual presence of vessels so situated, rendered the scene solemn almost to sublimity.

"Dost thou detect aught fluttering in the rigging, Luis?" the Admiral cautiously inquired. "My ear deceiveth me, or I hear something on the wing. The sounds, moreover, are quick and slight, like those produced by birds of indifferent size."

"Don Christopher, you are right. There are little creatures perched on the upper yards, and that of a size like the smaller songsters of the land."

"Hark!" interrupted the Admiral. "That is a joyous note, and of such a melody as might be met in one of the orange groves of Seville itself! God be praised for this sign of the extent and unity of his kingdom, since land cannot well be distant, when creatures gentle and

frail as these have so lately taken their flight from it!"

The presence of these birds soon became known to all on deck, and their songs brought more comfort than the most able mathematical demonstration, even though founded on modern learning, could have produced on the sensitive feelings of the common men.

"I told thee land was near," cried Sancho, turning with exultation to Martin Martinez, his constant disputant; — "here thou hast the proof of it, in a manner that none but the traitor will deny. Thou hearest the songs of orchard birds — notes that would never come from the throats of the tired; and which sound as gaily as if the dear little feathered rogues were pecking at a fig or a grape in a field of Spain."

"Sancho is right;" exclaimed the seamen. "The air savours of land, too — and the sea hath a look of the land; and God is with us — blessed be his Holy name — and honour to our lord the King, and to our gracious mistress, Doña Isabella!"

From this moment concern seemed to leave

the vessel again. It was thought, even by the Admiral himself, that the presence of birds so small, and which were judged to be so feeble of wing, was an unerring evidence that land was nigh; and land, too, of generous productions, and a mild, gentle climate; for, these warblers, like the softer sex of the human family, best love scenes that most favour their gentle propensities and delicate habits.

Investigation has since proved, that, in this particular, however plausible the grounds of error, Columbus was deceived. Men often mistake the powers of the inferior animals of creation, and at other times they overrate the extent of their instinct. In point of fact, a bird of light weight would be less liable to perish on the ocean, and in that low latitude, than a bird of more size, neither being aquatic. The sea-weed itself would furnish resting-places out of number for the smaller animals, and in some instances it would probably furnish food. That birds, purely of the land, should take long flights at sea, is certainly improbable; but, apart from the consequence

of gales, which often force even that heavy-winged animal the owl, hundreds of miles from the land, instinct is not infallible; whales being frequently found embayed in shallow waters, and birds sailing beyond the just limits of their habits. Whatever may have been the cause of the opportune appearance of these little inhabitants of the orchard, on the spars of the Santa Maria, the effect was of the most auspicious kind on the spirits of the men. As long as they sang, no amateurs ever listened to the most brilliant passages from the orchestra with greater delight, than those rude seamen listened to their warbling, and while they slept it was with a security that had its existence in veneration and gratitude. The songs were renewed with the dawn, shortly after which the whole went off in a body, taking their flight towards the south-west. The next day brought a calm, and then an air so light, that the vessels could with difficulty make their way through the dense masses of weeds that actually gave the ocean the appearance of vast inundated meadows. The current was

now found to be from the west, and shortly after daylight a new source of alarm was reported by Sancho.

"The people have got a notion in their heads, Señor Almirante, which partaketh so much of the marvellous, that it findeth exceeding favour with such as love miracles more than they love God. Martin Martinez, who is a philosopher in the way of terror, maintaineth that this sea into which we seem to be entering deeper and deeper, lieth over sunken islands; and that the weeds, which it would be idle to deny grow more abundant as we proceed, will shortly get to be so plentiful on the surface of the water, that the caravels will become unable to advance or to retreat."

"Doth Martin find any to believe this silly notion?"

"Señor Don Almirante, he doth; and for the plain reason, that it is easier to find those who are ready to believe an absurdity than to find those who will only believe truth. But the man is backed by some unlucky

chances that must come of the Powers of Darkness, more particularly as they can have no great wish to see your Excellency reach Cathay, with the intention of making a Christian of the Great Khan, and of planting the tree of the cross in his dominions. This calm sorely troubleth many, moreover, and the birds are beginning to be looked upon as creatures sent by Satan himself, to lead us whither we can never return. Some even believe we shall tread on shoals, and lie for ever stranded wrecks in the midst of the wide ocean!"

"Go bid the men prepare to sound; I will show them the folly of this idea, at least; and see that all are summoned to witness the experiment."

Columbus now repeated this order to the pilots, and the deep-sea was let go, in the usual manner. Fathom after fathom of the line glided over the rail, the lead taking its unerring way towards the bottom, until so little was left as to compel the downward course to be arrested.

"Ye see, my friends, that we are yet full

two hundred fathoms from the shoals ye so much dread, and as much more as the sea is deeper than our measurement. Lo! yonder, too, is a whale, spouting the water before him, a creature never seen, except on the coasts of large islands or continents."

This appeal of Columbus, which was in conformity with the notions of the day, had its weight, his crew being naturally most under the influence of notions that were popular. It is now known, however, that whales frequent those parts of the ocean where their food is most abundant; and one of the best grounds for taking them, of late years, has been what is called the False Brazil Banks, which lie near the centre of the ocean. In a word, all those signs that were connected with the movements of birds and fishes, and which appear to have had so much effect, not only on the common men of this great enterprise, but on Columbus himself, were of far less real importance than was then believed; navigators being so little accustomed to venture far from the land them-

selves, that they were not duly acquainted with the mysteries of the open ocean.

Notwithstanding the moments of cheerfulness and hope that intervened, distrust and apprehension were fast getting to be again the prevailing feelings among the mariners. Those who had been most disaffected from the first, seized every occasion to increase these apprehensions; and when the sun arose, Saturday, September 22nd, on a calm sea, there were not a few in the vessels who were disposed to unite in making another demand on the Admiral to turn the heads of the caravels towards the east.

"We have come some hundreds of leagues before a fair wind into a sea that is entirely unknown to man, until we have reached a part of the ocean where the winds seem altogether to fail us, and where there is danger of our being bound up in immovable weeds, or stranded on sunken islands, without the means of procuring food or water!"

Arguments like these, were suited to an age in which even the most learned were obliged to

grope their way to accurate knowledge, through the mists of superstition and ignorance, and in which it was a prevailing weakness to put faith, on the one hand, in visible proofs of the miraculous power of God, and, on the other, in substantial evidences of the ascendency of evil spirits, as they were permitted to affect the temporal affairs of those they persecuted.

It was, therefore, most fortunate for the success of the expedition, that a light breeze sprang up from the southward and westward, in the early part of the day just mentioned, enabling the vessels to gather way, and to move beyond the vast fields of weeds, that equally obstructed the progress of the caravels, and awakened the fears of their people. As it was an object to get clear of the floating obstacles that surrounded the vessels, the first large opening that offered was entered, and then the fleet was brought close upon a wind, heading as near as possible to the desired course. Columbus now believed himself to be steering west-north-west, when, in fact, he was sailing in a direction far nearer to his true

course, than when his ships headed west, by compass; the departure from the desired line of sailing, being owing to the variation in the needle. This circumstance alone would seem to establish the fact, that Columbus believed in his own theory of the moving star; since he would hardly have steered west-and-by-south-half-south, with a fair wind, for many days in succession, as he is known to have done, when it was his strongest wish to proceed directly west. He was now heading up, within half a point of the latter course, though he and all with him, fancied they were running off nearly two points to leeward of the so much desired direction.

But these little variations were trifles as compared with the advantage that the Admiral obtained over the fears of his followers by the shift of the wind and the liberation from the weeds. By the first, the men saw a proof that the breezes did not always blow from the same quarter; and by the last, they ascertained that they had not actually reached a point where the ocean had become impassable. Although

the wind was now favourable to return to the Canaries, no one any longer demanded that such a course should be adopted, so apt are we all to desire that which appears to be denied to us, and so ready to despise that which lies perfectly at our disposal.

This indeed was a moment when the feelings of the people appeared to be as variable as the light and baffling winds themselves. The Saturday passed away in the manner just mentioned, the vessels once more entering into large fields of weeds, just as the sun set. When the light returned, the airs headed them off to north-west and north-west-by-north, by compass, which was, in truth, steering north-west-by-west-half-west, and north-west-half-west. Birds abounded again, among which were a turtle-dove, and many living crabs were seen crawling among the weeds. All these signs would have encouraged the common men, had they not already so often proved deceptive.

"Señor," said Martin Martinez to the Admiral, when Columbus went among the crew to raise their drooping spirits, "we know not

what to think. For days did the wind blow in the same direction, leading us on, as it might be, to our ruin; and then it hath deserted us in such a sea as mariners in the Santa Maria never before saw;—a sea, looking like meadows on a river side, and which wanteth only kine and cow-herds to be mistaken for fields a little overflowed by a rise of the water, is a fearful thing!"

"Thy meadows are the weeds of the ocean, and prove the richness of the nature that hath produced them; while thy breezes from the east, are what all who have ever made the Guinea voyage, well know to exist in latitudes so low. I see nought in either to alarm a bold seaman; and as for the bottom, ye all know it hath not yet been found by many a long and weary fathom of line. Pepe, thou hast none of these weaknesses, but hast set thy heart on Cathay, and a sight of the Great Khan!"

"Señor Almirante, as I swore to Monica, so do I swear to your Excellency; and that is to be true and obedient. If the cross is to be raised among the infidels, my hand shall not be

backward in doing its share towards the holy act. Still, Señor, none of us like this long unnatural calm. Here is an ocean that hath no waves, but a surface so smooth that we much distrust whether the waters obey the same laws as they are known to do near Spain; for never before have I beheld a sea that hath so much the air of the dead! May it not be, Señor, that God hath placed a belt of this calm and stagnant water around the outer edges of the earth, in order to prevent the unheedy from looking into some of his sacred secrets?"

"Thy reasoning hath at least a savour of religion, and, though faulty, can scarce be condemned. God hath placed man on this earth, Pepe, to be its master, and to serve him by extending the dominion of his church, as well as by turning to the best account all the numberless blessings that accompany the great gift. As to the limits of which thou speakest, they exist only in idea, the earth being a sphere or a ball, to which there are no other edges than those thou seest everywhere on its surface."

"And as for what Martin saith," replied Sancho, who was never at fault for a fact or for a reason, "concerning the winds, and the weeds, and the calms, I can only wonder where a seaman of his years hath been navigating so long, that these things should be novelties. To me, all this is as common as dish-water at Moguer, and so much a matter of course, that I should not have remarked it, but for the whinings of Martin and his fellows. When the Santa Catalina made the voyage to that far-off region, Ireland, we landed on the sea-weed, a distance of half a league or so from the coast; and as for the wind, it blew regularly four weeks from one quarter, and four weeks from the other; after which the people of the country said it would blow four weeks each way, transversely; but we did not remain long enough in those seas to enable me to swear to the two last facts."

"Hast thou not heard of shoals so wide that a caravel could never find its way out of them, if it once entered?" demanded Martinez, fiercely; for, much addicted to gross exaggerations

himself, he little liked to be outdone; "and do not these weeds bespeak our near approach to such a danger, when the weeds themselves often are so closely packed as to come near to stop the ship?"

"Enough of this," said the Admiral; "at times we have weeds, and then we are altogether free from them; these changes are owing to the currents; no doubt, as soon as we have passed this meridian we shall come to clear water again."

"But the calm, Señor Almirante!" exclaimed a dozen voices. "This unnatural smoothness of the ocean frighteneth us! Never before did we see water so stagnant and immovable!"

"Call ye this stagnant and immovable?" exclaimed the Admiral. "Nature herself arises to reproach your senseless fears, and to contradict your mistaken reasoning, by her own signs and portents!"

This was said as the Santa Maria's bows rose on a long low swell, every spar creaking at the motion, and the whole hull heaving and setting as the billow passed beneath it, washing the

sides of the ship from the water-line to its channels. At this moment there was not even a breath of air, and the seamen gazed about them with an astonishment that was increased and rendered extreme by dread. The ship had scarcely settled heavily into the long trough, when a second wave lifted her again forward, and billow succeeded billow, each successive wave increasing in height, until the entire ocean was undulating, though only marked at distant intervals, and that slightly, by the foam of crests or combing seas. It took half an hour to bring this phenomenon up to its height, when all three vessels were wallowing in the seas, as mariners term it, their hulls falling off helplessly into the troughs, until the water fairly spouted from their low scuppers, as each rose by her buoyancy from some roll deeper than common. Fancying that this occurrence promised to be either a source of new alarm, or a means of appeasing the old one, Columbus took early measures to turn it to account in the latter mode. Causing all the crew to assemble at the break of the poop, he addressed them, briefly, in the following words :—

"Ye see, men, that your late fears about the stagnant ocean are rebuked, in this sudden manner, as it might be, by the hand of God himself, proving beyond dispute, that no danger is to be apprehended from that source. I might impose on your ignorance, and insist that this sudden rising of the sea is a miracle wrought to sustain me against your rebellious repinings and unthinking alarms; but the cause in which I am engaged needs no support of this nature, that doth not truly come from heaven. The calms, and the smoothness of the water, and even the weeds of which ye complain, come from the vicinity of some great body of land; I think not a continent, as that must lie still farther west, but of islands, either so large or so numerous as to make a far-extended lee; while these swells are probably the evidence of wind at a distance, which hath driven up the ocean into mountainous waves, such as we often see them, and which send out their dying efforts, even beyond the limits of the gale. I do not say that this intervention, to appease your fears, doth not come of God,

in whose hands I am; for this last do I fully believe, and for it am I fully grateful; but it cometh through the agencies of nature, and can in no sense be deemed providential, except as it demonstrateth the continuance of the divine care, as well as its surpassing goodness. Go, then, and be tranquil. Remember if Spain be far behind ye, that Cathay now lieth at no great distance before ye; that each hour shorteneth that distance, as well as the time necessary to reach our goal. He that remaineth true and faithful shall not repent his confidence; while he who unnecessarily disturbeth either himself or others with silly doubts, may look forward to an exercise of authority that shall maintain the rights of their Highnesses to the duty of all their servants."

We record this speech of the great navigator with so much the more pleasure, as it goes fully to establish the fact that he did not believe the sudden rising of the seas on this occasion was owing to a direct miracle, as some of the historians and biographers seem inclined to believe; but rather to a providential inter-

ference of Divine Power, through natural means, in order to protect him against the consequences of the blind apprehensions of his followers. It is not easy, indeed, to suppose, that a seaman as experienced as Columbus, could be ignorant of the natural cause of a circumstance so very common on the ocean, that those who dwell on its coasts have frequent occasion to witness its occurrence.

CHAPTER X.

"*Ora pro nobis, Mater,*"—what a spell
Was in those notes, with day's last glory dying
On the flush'd waters!—Seem'd they not to swell
From the far dust, wherein my sires were lying
With crucifix and sword? Oh! yet how clear
Comes their reproachful sweetness to my ear!
"*Ora*"—with all the purple waves replying,
All my youth's visions rising in the strain—
And I had thought it much to bear the rack and chain!

The Forest Sanctuary.

It may now be well to recapitulate, and to let the reader distinctly know how far the adventurers had actually advanced into the unknown waters of the Atlantic; what was their real, and what their supposed position. As has been seen, from the time of quitting Gomera, the Admiral kept two reckonings, one intended for his own government, which came as near the truth as the imperfect means of the

science of navigation that were then in use would allow; and another that was freely exhibited to the crew, and was purposely miscalculated in order to prevent alarm, on account of the distance that had been passed. As Columbus believed himself to be employed in the service of God, this act of deception would be thought a species of pious fraud in that devout age; and it is by no means probable that it gave the conscience of the navigator any trouble, since churchmen, even, did not hesitate always about buttressing the walls of faith by means still less justifiable.

The long calms and light head-winds had prevented the vessels from making much progress for the few last days; and, by estimating the distance that was subsequently run in a course but a little south of west, it appears, notwithstanding all the encouraging signs of birds, fishes, calms, and smooth water, that on the morning of Monday, September 24th, or that of the fifteenth day after losing sight of Ferro, the expedition was about half-way across the Atlantic, counting from continent to

continent, on the parallel of about 31 or 32 degrees of north latitude. The circumstance of the vessels being so far north of the Canaries, when it is known that they had been running most of the time west, a little southerly, must be imputed to the course steered in the scant winds, and perhaps to the general set of the currents. With this brief explanation we return to the daily progress of the ships.

The influence of the trades was once more felt, though in a very slight degree, in the course of the twenty-four hours that succeeded the day of the "miraculous seas," and the vessels again headed west by compass. Birds were seen as usual, among which was a pelican. The whole progress of the vessels was less than fifty miles, a distance that was lessened, as usual, in the public reckoning.

The morning of the 25th was calm; but the wind returned, a steady gentle breeze from the south-east, when the day was far advanced, the caravels passing most of the hours of light floating near each other in a lazy indolence, or barely stirring the water with their stems,

at a rate little if any exceeding that of a mile an hour.

The Pinta kept near the Santa Maria, and the officers and crews of the two vessels conversed freely with each other, concerning their hopes and situation. Columbus listened to these dialogues for a long time, endeavouring to collect the predominant feeling from the more guarded expressions that were thus publicly delivered, and watching each turn of the expressions with jealous vigilance. At length it struck him that the occasion was favourable to producing a good effect on the spirits of his followers.

"What hast thou thought of the chart I sent thee three days since, good Martin Alonzo?" called out the Admiral: "dost thou see in it aught to satisfy thee that we are approaching the Indies, and that our time of trial draweth rapidly to an end?"

At the first sound of the Admiral's voice, every syllable was hushed among the people; for, in spite of their discontent and their disposition even to rise against him, in their ex-

tremity, Columbus had succeeded in creating a profound respect for his judgment and his person among all his followers.

"'Tis a rare and well-designed chart, Señor Don Christopher," answered the master of the Pinta, "and doth a fair credit to him who hath copied and enlarged, as well as to him who first projected it. I doubt that it is the work of some learned scholar, that hath united the opinions of all the greater navigators in his map."

"The original came from one Paul Toscanelli, a learned Tuscan, who dwelleth at Firenze in that country; a man of exceeding knowledge, and of an industry in investigation that putteth idleness to shame. Accompanying the chart he sent a missive that hath much profound and learned matter on the subject of the Indies, and touching those islands that thou seest laid down with so much particularity. In that letter he speaketh of divers places, as being so many wonderful exemplars of the power of man; more especially of the port of Zaiton, which sendeth

forth no less than a hundred ships yearly, loaded with the single product of the pepper tree. He saith, moreover, that an ambassador came to the Holy Father, in the time of Eugenius IV, of blessed memory, to express the desire of the Great Khan, which meaneth King of Kings, in the dialect of those regions, to be on friendly terms with the Christians of the west, as we were then termed; but of the east, as will shortly be our designation in that part of the world."

"This is surprising, Señor!" exclaimed Pinzon; "how is it known, or is it known at all, of a certainty?"

"Beyond a question; since Paul stateth, in his missive, that he saw much of this same ambassador, living greatly in his society, Eugenius deceasing as lately as 1477. From the ambassador, no doubt a wise and grave personage, since no other would have been sent so far on a mission to the Head of the Church; —from this discreet person, then, did Toscanelli gain much pleasant information concerning the populousness and vast extent of those

distant countries, the gorgeousness of the palaces, and the glorious beauty of the cities. He spoke of one town, in particular, that surpasseth all others of the known world; and of a single river that hath two hundred noble cities on its own banks, with marble bridges spanning the stream. The chart before thee, Martin Alonzo, showeth that the exact distance from Lisbon to the city of Quisay is just three thousand nine hundred miles of Italy, or about a thousand leagues, steering always in a due-west direction." *

"And doth the learned Tuscan say ought of the riches of those countries?" demanded Master Alonzo; a question that caused all within hearing to prick up their ears afresh.

"That doth he, and in these precise and impressive words—'This is a noble country,' observed the learned Paul, in his missive, 'and ought to be explored by us, on account of its

* NOTE.—It is worthy of remark that the city of Philadelphia stands, as near as may be, in the position that the honest Paul Toscanelli supposed to have been occupied by "the famous city of Quisay."

great riches, and the quantity of gold, silver, and precious stones which might be obtained there.' He moreover describeth Quisay as being five-and-thirty leagues in circuit, and addeth that its name in the Castilian, is 'the City of Heaven.'"

"In which case," muttered Sancho, though in a tone so low that no one but Pepe heard him, "there is little need of our bearing thither the cross, which was intended for the benefit of man, and not of paradise."

"I see here two large islands, Señor Almirante," continued Pinzon, keeping his eyes on the chart, "one of which is called Antilla, and the other is the Cipango of which your Excellency so often speaketh."

"Even so," good Martin Alonzo, and thou also seest that they are laid down with a precision that must prevent any experienced navigator from missing his way when in pursuit of them. These islands lie just two hundred and twenty-five leagues asunder."

"According to our reckoning here in the

Pinta, noble Admiral, we cannot then be far from Cipango at this very moment."

"It would so seem by the reckonings, though I somewhat doubt their justness. It is a common error of pilots to run ahead of their reckonings, but in this instance apprehension hath brought ye behind them. Cipango lieth many days' sail from the continent of Asia, and cannot, therefore, be far from this spot; still the currents have been adverse, and I doubt that it will be found that we are as near this island, good Martin Alonzo, as thou and thy companions imagine. Let the chart be returned, and I will trace our actual position on it, that all may see what reason there is to despond, and what reason to rejoice."

Pinzon now took the chart, rolled it together carefully, attached a light weight, and, securing the whole with the end of a log-line, he hove it on board the Santa Maria, as a seaman makes a cast with the lead. So near were the vessels at the moment, that this communication was made without any difficulty; after which the

Pinta, letting fall an additional sail or two, flapped slowly ahead, her superiority, particularly in light winds, being at all times apparent.

Columbus now caused the chart to be spread over a table on the poop, and invited all who chose to draw near, in order that they might, with their own eyes, see the precise spot on the ocean where the Admiral supposed the vessels to be. As each day's work was accurately laid down and measured on the chart, by one as expert as the great navigator himself, there is little question that he succeeded in showing his people, as near as might be, and subject to the deduction in distance that was intentionally made, the longitude and latitude to which the expedition had then reached; and as this brought them quite near those islands which were believed to lie east of the continent of Asia, this tangible proof of their progress had far more effect than any demonstration that depended on abstract reasoning, even when grounded on premises that were true; most men submitting sooner to the authority of the

senses, than to the influence of the mere mind. The seamen did not stop to inquire how it was settled that Cipango lay in the precise place where it had been projected on this famous chart, but seeing it there in black and white, they were disposed to believe it was really in the spot it appeared to be; and as Columbus's reputation for keeping a ship's reckoning far surpassed that of any other navigator in the fleet, the facts were held to be established. Great was the joy, in consequence; and the minds of the people again passed from the verge of despair to an excess and illusion of hope, that was raised only to be disappointed.

That Columbus was sincere in all that related to this new delusion, with the exception of the calculated reduction of the true distance, is beyond a doubt. In common with the cosmographers of the age, he believed the circumference of the earth much less than actual measurement has since shown it to be; striking out of the calculations at once nearly the whole breadth of the Pacific Ocean. That this conclusion was very natural, will be seen by glan-

cing at the geographical facts that the learned then possessed, as data for their theories.

It was known that the continent of Asia was bounded on the east by a vast ocean, and that a similar body of water bounded Europe on the west, leaving the plausible inference, on the supposition that the earth was a sphere, that nothing but islands existed between these two great boundaries of land. Less than half of the real circumference of the globe is to be found between the western and eastern verges of the old continent, as they were then known; but it was too bold an effort of the mind to conceive that startling fact, in the condition of human knowledge at the close of the fifteenth century. The theories were consequently content with drawing the limits of the east and the west into a much narrower circle, finding no data for any freer speculation, and believing it a sufficient act of boldness to maintain the spherical formation of the earth at all. It is true, that the latter theory was as old as Ptolemy, and quite probably much older; but even the antiquity of a system begins to be an argu-

ment against it in the minds of the vulgar, when centuries elapse, and it receives no confirmation from actual experiment. Columbus supposed his island of Cipango, or Japan, to lie about a hundred and forty degrees of longitude east of its actual position; and, as a degree of longitude in the latitude of Japan, or 35° north, supposing the surface of the earth to be perfectly spherical, is about fifty-six statute miles, it follows that Columbus had advanced this island on his chart more than seven thousand English miles towards the eastward, or a distance materially exceeding two thousand marine leagues.

All this, however, was not only hidden in mystery as regards the common men of the expedition, but it far outstripped the boldest conceptions of the great navigator himself. Facts of this nature, notwithstanding, are far from detracting from the glory of the vast discoveries that were subsequently made, since they prove under what moral disadvantages the expedition was conceived, and under what a limited degree of knowledge it finally triumphed.

While Columbus was thus employed with the chart, it was a curious thing to witness the manner in which the seamen watched his smallest movement, studied the expression of his grave and composed countenance, and sought to read their fate in the contraction or dilatation of his eyes. The gentlemen of the Santa Maria and the pilots, stood at his elbow, and here and there some old mariner ventured to take his post at hand, where he could follow the slow progress of the pen or note the explanation of a figure. Among these was Sancho, who was generally admitted to be one of the most expert seamen in the little fleet, in all things, at least, that did not require the knowledge of the schools. Columbus even turned to these men, and spoke them kindly, endeavouring to make them comprehend a part of their calling, which they saw practised daily, without ever succeeding in acquiring a practical acquaintance with it, pointing out particularly the distance come, and that which yet remained before them. Others, again, the less experienced, but not the less interested among the crew,

hung about the rigging, whence they could overlook the scene, and fancy they beheld demonstrations that came of theories which it as much exceeded their reasoning powers to understand, as it exceeded their physical vision to behold the desired Indies themselves. As men become intellectual, they entertain abstractions, leaving the dominion of the senses to take refuge in that of thought. Until this change arrives, however, we are all singularly influenced by a parade of positive things. Words spoken seldom produce the effect of words written; and the praise or censure that would enter lightly and unheeded into the ear, might even change our estimates of character, when received into the mind through the medium of the eye. Thus, the very seamen, who could not comprehend the reasoning of Columbus, fancied they understood his chart, and willingly enough believed that islands and continents must exist in the precise places where they saw them so plainly delineated.

After this exhibition, cheerfulness resumed its sway over the crew of the Santa Maria;

and Sancho, who was generally considered as of the party of the Admiral, was eagerly appealed to by his fellows, for many of the little circumstances that were thought to explain the features of the chart.

"Dost think, Sancho, that Cipango is as large as the Admiral hath got the island on the chart?" asked one who had passed from the verge of despair to the other extreme; "that it lieth fairly, any eye may see, since its look is as natural as that of Ferro or Madeira."

"That hath he," answered Sancho, positively, "as one may see by its shape. Didst not notice the capes, and bays, and headlands, all laid down as plainly as on any other well-known coast? Ah! these Genoese are skilful navigators; and Señor Colon, our noble Admiral, hath not come all this distance without having some notion in what roadstead he is to anchor."

In such conclusive arguments, the dullest minds of the crew found exceeding consolation; whilst among all the common people of

the ship, there was not one who did not feel more confidence in the happy termination of the voyage, since he had this seeming ocular proof of the existence of land in the part of the ocean they were in.

When the discourse between the Admiral and Pinzon ceased, the latter made sail on the Pinta, which vessel had slowly passed the Santa Maria, and was now a hundred yards, or more, ahead of her; neither going through the water at a rate exceeding a knot an hour. At the moment just mentioned, or while the men were conversing of their newly awakened hopes, a shout drew all eyes towards their consort, where Pinzon was seen on the poop, waving his cap in exultation, and giving the usual proofs of extravagant delight.

"Land!—Land! Señor!" he shouted. "I claim my reward! Land! Land!"

"In what direction, good Martin Alonzo?" asked Columbus, so eagerly that his voice fairly trembled. "In which quarter dost thou perceive this welcome neighbour?"

"Here, to the south-west," pointing in that

direction,—a range of dim but noble mountains, and such as promise to satisfy the pious longings of the Holy Father himself!"

Every eye turned towards the south-west, and there, indeed, they fancied they beheld the long-sought proofs of their success. A faint, hazy mass, was visible in the horizon, broken in outline, more distinctly marked than clouds usually are, and yet so obscure as to require a practised eye to draw it out of the obscurity of the void. This is the manner in which land often appears to seamen, in peculiar conditions of the atmosphere; others, under such circumstances, being seldom able to distinguish it at all. Columbus was so practised in all the phenomena of the ocean, that the face of every man in the Santa Maria was turned towards his, in breathless expectation of the result, as soon as the first glance had been given towards the point of the compass mentioned. It was impossible to mistake the expression of the Admiral's countenance, which immediately became radiant with delight and pious exultation. Uncovering himself, he cast a look upward in

unbounded gratitude, and then fell on his knees, to return open thanks to God. This was the signal of triumph, and yet, in their desolate situation, exultation was not the prevalent feeling of the moment. Like Columbus, the men felt their absolute dependence on God; and a sense of humble and rebuked gratitude came over every spirit, as it might be simultaneously. Kneeling, the entire crews of the three vessels simultaneously commenced the chant of "Gloria in excelsis Deo!" lifting the voice of praise, for the first time since the foundations of the earth were laid, in that deep solitude of the ocean. Matins and vespers, it is true, were then habitually repeated in most Christian ships; but this sublime chant was now uttered to waves that had been praising their Maker, in their might and in their calm, for so many thousand years, for the first time in the voice of man.

"*Glory be to God on high!*" sang these rude mariners, with hearts softened by their escapes, dangers, and success, speaking as one man, though modulating their tones to the solemn

harmony of a religious rite,—"*and on earth peace, goodwill towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory! O Lord God! Heavenly King! God the Father Almighty!*" &c. &c.

In this noble chant, which would seem to approach as near to the praises of angels as human powers can ever hope to rise, the voice of the Admiral was distinct and deep, but trembling with emotion.

When this act of pious gratitude was performed, the men ascended the rigging to make more certain of their success. All agreed in pronouncing the faintly delineated mass to be land, and the first sudden transport of unexpected joy was succeeded by the more regulated feelings of confirmed security. The sun set a little north of the dim mountains, and night closed around the scene, shadowing the ocean with as much of gloom as is ever to be found beneath a tropical and cloudless sky. As the first watch was set, Columbus, who, whenever the winds would allow, had

persevered in steering what he fancied to be a due-west course, to satisfy the longings of his people, ordered the vessels to haul up to south-west by compass, which was in fact heading south-west by south, southerly. The wind increased; and, as the Admiral had supposed the land to be distant about twenty-five leagues, when last seen, all in the little fleet confidently relied on obtaining a full and complete view of it in the morning. Columbus himself entertained this hope, though he varied his course reluctantly, feeling certain that the continent would be met by sailing west, or what he thought to be west, though he could have no similar confidence as to making any island.

Few slept soundly that night; visions of oriental riches, and of the wonders of the East, crowding on the minds of even the least imaginative, converting their slumbers into dreams rendered uneasy by longings for gold, and anticipations of the wonders of the unknown East. The men left their hammocks, from hour to hour, to stand in the rigging, watching for some new proofs of their proximity

to the much-desired islands, and straining their eyes in vain, in the hope of looking deeper into the obscurity in quest of objects that fancy had already begun to invest with forms. In the course of the night, the vessels ran in a direct line towards the south-west, seventeen of the twenty-five leagues that Columbus had supposed alone separated him from this new discovery; and just before the light dawned every soul in the three vessels was stirring, in the eager hope of having the panorama of day open on such a sight, as they felt it to be but a slight grievance to have come so far, and to have risked so much, to behold.

"Yonder is a streak of light glimmering in the east," cried Luis in a cheerful voice; "and now, Señor Almirante, we may unite in terming you the honoured of the earth!"

"All rests with God, my young friend," returned Columbus; "whether land is near us or not, it boundeth the western ocean, and to that boundary we must proceed. Thou art right, truly, friend Gutierrez; the light is beginning to shed itself along the eastern

margin of the sea, and even to rise in an arch into the vault above it."

"Would that the sun rose, for this one day, in the west, that we might catch the first glimpse of our new possessions in that radiant field of heaven, which his coming rays are so gloriously illuminating above the track we have just passed!"

"That will not happen, Master Pedro, since Sol hath journeyed daily round this planet of ours, from east to west, since time began, and will so continue to journey until time shall cease. This *is* a fact on which our senses may be trusted, though they mislead us in so many other things."

So reasoned Columbus,—a man whose mind had outstripped the age in his favourite study, and who was usually so calm and philosophical, —simply because he reasoned in the fetters of habit and prejudice. The celebrated system of Ptolemy, that strange compound of truth and error, was the favourite astronomical law of the day. Copernicus, who was then but a mere youth, did not reduce the just conception

of Pythagoras—just in outline, though fanciful in its connection with both cause and effect—to the precision of science for many years after the discovery of America; and it is a strong proof of the dangers which attended the advancement of thought, that he was rewarded for this vast effort of human reason by excommunication from the church, the maledictions of which actually rested on his soul, if not on his body, until within a few years of the present moment! This single circumstance will show the reader how much our navigator had to overcome in achieving the great office he had assumed.

But all this time, the day is dawning, and the light is beginning to diffuse itself over the entire panorama of ocean and sky. As means were afforded, each look eagerly took in the whole range of the western horizon, and a chill of disappointment settled on every heart, as suspicion gradually became confirmation, that no land was visible. The vessels had passed in the night those bounds of the visible horizon where masses of clouds had settled; and no

one could any longer doubt that his senses had been deceived by some accidental peculiarity in the atmosphere. All eyes now turned again to the Admiral, who, while he felt the disappointment in his inmost heart, maintained a dignified calm that it was not easy to disturb.

"These signs are not infrequent at sea, Señors," he said to those near him, speaking loud enough, nevertheless, to be heard by most of the crew, "though seldom as treacherous as they have now proved to be. All accustomed to the ocean have doubtless seen them often; and as physical facts, they must be taken as counting neither for nor against us. As omens, each person will consider them as he putteth his trust in God, whose grace and mercy to us all, is yet, by a million of times, unrequited, and still would be, were we to sing *Gloria in excelsis*, from morn till night, as long as breath lasted for the sacred office."

"Still, our hope was so very strong, Don Christopher," observed one of the gentlemen, "that we find the disappointment hard to be

borne. You speak of omens, Señor; are there any physical signs of our being near the land of Cathay?"

"Omens come of God, if they come at all. They are a species of miracles preceding natural events, as real miracles surpass them. I think this expedition cometh of God; and I see no irreverence in supposing that this late appearance of land may have been heaped along the horizon for an encouraging sign to persevere, and as a proof that our labours will be rewarded in the end. I cannot say, nevertheless, that any but natural means were used, for these deceptions are familiar to us mariners."

"I shall endeavour so to consider it, Señor Almirante," gravely returned the other; and the conversation dropped.

The non-appearance of the land, which had been so confidently hoped for, produced a deep gloom in the vessels, notwithstanding; again changing the joy of their people into despondency. Columbus continued to steer due-west by compass, or west by south, southerly, in

reality, until meridian, when, yielding to the burning wishes of those around him, he again altered his course to the south-west. This course was followed until the ships had gone far enough in that direction to leave no doubt that the people had been misled by clouds the preceding evening. At night, when not the faintest hope remained, the vessels kept away due west again, running in the course of the twenty-four hours quite thirty-one leagues, which were recorded before the crew as twenty-four.

For several succeeding days no material changes occurred. The wind continued favourable, though frequently so light as to urge the vessels very slowly ahead, reducing the day's progress sometimes to little more than fifty of our English miles. The sea was calm, and weeds were again met, though in much smaller quantities than before. September 29th, or the fourth day after Pinzon had called out "land," another frigate-bird was seen; and as it was the prevalent notion among seamen that this bird never flew far from the shore, some faint hopes were momentarily revived by

his passage. Two pelicans also appeared, and the air was so soft and balmy that Columbus declared nothing but nightingales were wanting to render the nights as delicious as those of Andalusia.

In this manner did birds come and go, exciting hopes that were doomed to be disappointed; sometimes flying in numbers that would seem to forbid the idea that they could be straying on the waste of waters, without the certainty of their position. Again, too, the attention of the Admiral and of the people was drawn to the variation of the needle, all uniting in the opinion that the phenomenon was only to be explained by the movements of the star. At length the first day of October arrived, and the pilots of the Admiral's vessel seriously set to work to ascertain the distance they had come. They had been misled as well as the rest, by the management of Columbus, and they now approached the latter, as he stood at his usual post on the poop, in order to give the result of their calculations, with

countenances that were faithful indexes of the concern they felt.

"We are not less than five hundred and seventy-eight leagues west of Ferro, Señor Almirante," commenced one of the two; "a fearful distance to venture into the bosom of an unknown ocean!"

"Thou say'st true, honest Bartolemeo," returned Columbus calmly; "though the farther we venture, the greater will be the honour. Thy reckoning is even short of the truth, since this of mine, which is no secret from our people, giveth even five hundred and eighty-four leagues, fully six more than thine. But, after all, this scarce equalleth a voyage from Lisbon to Guinea, and we are not men to be outdone by the seamen of Don John!"

"Ah! Señor Almirante, the Portuguese have their islands by the way, and the old world at their elbows; while we, should this earth prove not to be really a sphere, are hourly sailing towards its verge, and are running into untried dangers!"

"Go to, Bartolemeo! thou talkest like a river-man who hath been blown outside his bar by a strong breeze from the land, and who fancieth his risks greater than man ever yet endured, because the water that wetteth his tongue is salt. Let the men see this reckoning, fearlessly; and strive to be of cheer, lest we remember thy misgivings beneath the groves of Cathay."

"The man is sore beset with dread," coolly observed Luis, as the pilots descended from the poop with a lingering step and a heavy heart. "Even your six short leagues added to the weight on his spirit. Five hundred and seventy-eight were frightful, but five hundred and eighty-four became burthensome to his soul!"

"What would he then have thought had he known the truth, of which, young Count, even thou art ignorant?"

"I hope you do not distrust my nerves, Don Christopher, that this matter is kept a secret from me?"

"I ought not, I do believe, Señor de Llera;

and yet one gets to be distrustful even of himself, when weighty concerns hang by a thread. Hast thou any real idea of the length of the road we have come?"

"Not I, by St. Iago! Señor. It is enough for me that we are far from the Doña Mercedes, and a league more or less counts but little. Should your theory be true, and the earth prove to be round, I have the consolation of knowing that we shall get back to Spain in time, even by chasing the sun."

"Still thou hast some general notion of our true distance from Ferro, knowing that each day it is lessened before the people."

"To tell you the truth, Don Christopher, arithmetic and I have little feeling for each other. For the life of me, I never could tell the exact amount of my own revenues in figures, though it might not be so difficult to come at their results in another sense. If truth were said, however, I should think your five hundred and eighty leagues might fairly be set down at some six hundred and ten or twenty."

"Add yet another hundred, and thou wilt not be far from the fact. We are, at this moment, seven hundred and seven leagues from Ferro, and fast drawing near to the meridian of Cipango. In another glorious week, or ten days at most, I shall begin seriously to expect to see the continent of Asia!"

"This is travelling faster than I had thought, Señor," answered Luis, carelessly. "But journey on; one of your followers will not complain, though we circle earth itself."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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